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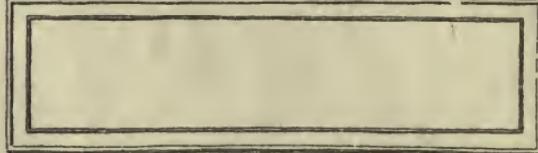
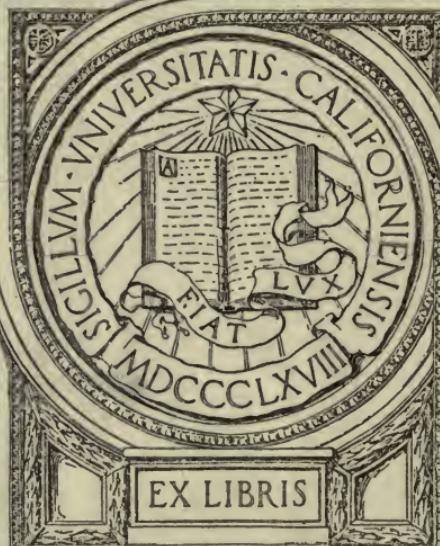
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# NOTES ON CRIMINAL TRIBES.

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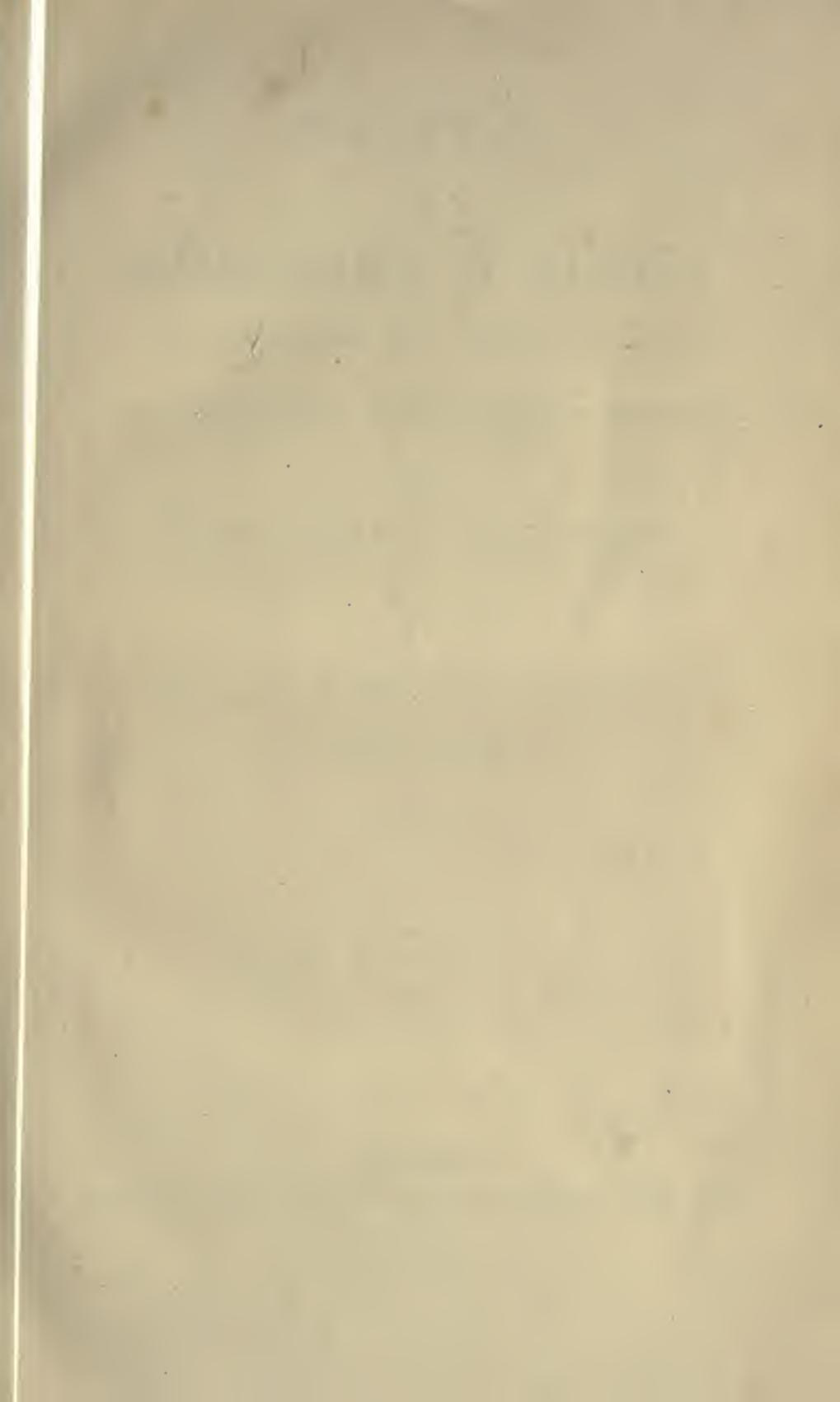
MAJOR E. J. GUNTHORPE, M.S.C.

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NOTES  
ON  
**CRIMINAL TRIBES**  
RESIDING IN OR FREQUENTING  
THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, BERAR  
AND  
THE CENTRAL PROVINCES.

BY  
MAJOR E. J. GUNTHORPE, M.S.C.,  
BERAR POLICE.

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## PREFACE.

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These few notes were originally commenced with the intention of aiding the Police to recognize, and cope with, the Criminal Tribes who frequent these parts of India. At the request of friends the papers appeared first in the *Times of India*, and in hopes that they may be of some slight interest to the public, and especially to those whose duty brings them in constant contact with the predatory classes, they are now issued in book form.

Much time and trouble has been expended in collecting and verifying the facts set forth, from the people themselves concerning whom they are written, and it is believed they will be found accurate.

E. J. G.

**470385**



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# NOTES ON CRIMINAL TRIBES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BOWRIE\* (Budhuck).

BOWRIES, who are Hindoos, are known by different names, according to the part of the country in which they have settled, *i.e.*, Bagoris, Bagris, or Wagris, Budhucks, Moghyas, Delhiwal Bowries, Malpooras, Marwarras, &c., &c. All make use of the same language, which was originally Guzeratee, and observe

\* In Khandeish, Berar, parts of the Central Provinces and Deccan generally, there are six tribes who are of the true Bowrie family, who immigrated south into these parts many generations ago, and still retain their caste names, though they are known in the provinces by assumed ones. They are—

1. Wagris or Moghyas known as Takenkars.
2. Bowries known as Lungotee Pardhis.
3. Bowries known as Choetawalla Pardhis.
4. Bowries known as Seelajeet Pardhis.
5. Maywarrees known as Phansi Pardhis.
6. Bowries known as Kalbailias, disguised as Kanipou Naths.

All these use a language similar to that of the Bowries or Budhucks of the north.

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the same customs and rites. When away from their homes on a thieving expedition, in the presence of strangers Budhucks always talk Hindustani to one another. Those who come periodically down to the Deccan in search of plunder are chiefly the "Malpoora" Bowries from Bhopal, "Marwarras" from Marwar, and "Delhiwals" from the districts of Delhi. They penetrate as far south as the southern parts of the Madras Presidency, but do not cross over to Ceylon. Moghyas rarely come further south than Indore. All assume various disguises when visiting the Deccan. The Malpooras and Marwarras adopt those of Byragees and Gosseins ; occasionally, but very rarely, as ordinary Purdesees in search of work, and also as Marwari Brahmin mendicants ; Delhiwals at one time invariably as Byragees, but very often now as Aghorees and Gosseins ; and Moghyas only as Byragees.

Their disguises are extremely well got up, and they learn so well the prayers, sayings, and doings of the religious mendicants whose guise they assume, that it is next to impossible, save for a real Gossein or Byragee, to see through the artifice. A few suggestions as to how to detect them are offered further on. All Bowries have been from ages past and are still by profession inveterate and irreclaimable robbers. In former days

they were most daring dacoits, but the Thuggee and Dacoity Department has much broken up violent crime amongst them, and their great *forte* now is burglary, at which, and at cutting into tents and robbing camps, they are most expert and daring. It is only the Delhiwal Bowries, however, and not the others, who practise the latter styles of crime. Moghyas still commit dacoity. Bowries were originally Rajpoots, and still retain the same "ghotes" or sub-divisions, &c. They are very fond of liquor, always live well, and are fond of mutton and buffalo flesh, but not beef. After a successful exploit the gang have a feast, at which much liquor is drunk. When disguised as Byragees or Gosseins, Bowries always put up at a temple (a halting-place is called "Asen" by them), and when otherwise they do as do the people whose guise they have assumed.

Women never accompany them. They move about in gangs of from three to eight or even more, sometimes thirty or forty. The headman of a gang is styled "Kadoo;" it is his duty to make the breach and to enter a house, and to be the leader in all exploits. The house-breaking implement is called a "Gyan." If talking about it in the presence of strangers a "Dass" is added to it, making it "Gyandass," as if it were a

comrade being alluded to. It is from  $11\frac{1}{2}$  to 12 inches long in all, of iron and tipped with steel. The steel part is about three inches long, is made square tapering off to the point ; the rest of the instrument is round, with a ball for the handle. The “Gyan” is carried by one of the party about half a mile either in advance or rear of the main gang when travelling, and is generally put into the folds of a cloth which is thrown over the shoulder, so that should any Government servant appear it is handy to cast away, which is always done, and picked up again when the supposed danger is passed. When halted the “Gyan” is buried a long way off from their resting-place. Some Bowries have been known to carry the instrument under the pommel of the saddle on the march when ponies have been used by the gang. Every “Kadoo” carries a short strong-bladed knife (“Natree”) with him when entering a house, and which he will use if attempt is made to catch him and he finds no chance of escape, otherwise the knife is only used as a last resource ; his companions outside will rescue their “Kadoo” at any hazard, and if necessary even by taking life. By day Bowries are not to be feared and will never resist arrest, but will do their best to escape from custody ; the favourite time for so attempting is when under escort out of a lock-up. They break away suddenly and throw stones at their pursuers.

When disguised as Gosseins or Byragees a "Ghir" or a "Dass" is added to their real names; thus, "Girwurghir," "Goomandass." They worship "Devi," the principal one being at Kerolee, about 100 miles from Jeypoor. Pilgrimages are made to this place by all the Bowrie tribe from great distances. Oaths are taken in the name of this deity; they worship none other. Before proceeding on an exploit the spirits of deceased relatives (known for their expertness and bravery) are invoked for good or bad omens. The "Kadoo" of each gang is the one who generally consults. For this ceremony grains of unboiled wheat are used; if this is not procurable "jowari" is substituted. But recourse is rarely had to the latter grain, as the "Kadoo" usually carries some of the prepared wheat about his person. It is prepared by being soaked in ghee and the husk rubbed off between the palms of the hands. The ceremony of consulting the spirits is performed as follows:—The "Kadoo," having washed and cleaned himself, sits on the ground facing the west; a handful of wheat is put down on the corner of a sheet or blanket. Two grains are taken and placed on the right or propitious, and one grain on the left or unlucky side. A few grains are then taken up haphazard with the tip of the fingers and thumb of the right hand, and thrown down and counted out by fours. If the number be odd, the

odd grain is put in a line under the grain to the left hand ; if the number be even, the last two grains counted out are put in a line under the two grains placed to the right hand. A few more grains are again taken as before and counted out and disposed of as above. If the first essay produces an *odd* number, and the next an *even*, all the grains are collected and the business begun afresh till either three odd grains are obtained consecutively to the *left* or three even pairs consecutively on the *right* or lucky side. The former signifies the undertaking will not prosper, and the latter that it will. No burglary is committed during moon-light nights. The days when the moon enters her first quarter till the end of the third quarter are used for exploring houses, which is very easy in the guise of the religious mendicants usually assumed. They never trust to others for information ; the "Kadoo" obtains it himself. During this period the gang does not shift its resting-place, but directly dark nights commence all are on the move again. Burglary is never committed anywhere near where they may be putting up at the time, but they go long distances for the purpose. They have been known to break into a house and to put 30 miles between it and their halting-place the same night. Bowries have two modes of entering a house. Their favourite one is by the "Buglee," as they call it. A

hole large enough for the arm to be introduced is made in the wall at the side of a door frame, in a line with the latch, the fastening is undone by the hand and the door opened ; if nothing is found in that room the same plan is adopted to enter another. A “Kadoo” told the writer he could break into as many as eleven houses in one night by the “Buglee,” and that he had done so on several occasions. If certain of the position of the treasure or jewellery, and it cannot be reached by the “Buglee” entrance, the second mode is adopted of making a breach in the wall at the exact spot or as near as possible to where the valuables lie. The hole is made just large enough to admit the “Kadoo,” who always enters a breach head foremost, and retreats feet foremost, usually with the knife between his, teeth ready for defence should an inmate of the house attempt capture. They are very expert at wrenching jewellery off the persons of sleeping women (this operation is termed “Oojânto”), and is invariably resorted to if a jewel-bedecked slumbering female is seen in a house entered by them. Whilst a “Kadoo” is making a breach in a wall, one man (called a “Pootwariâ”) stations himself a few paces behind him to keep watch and warn him of danger. It is the duty also of the “Pootwariâ” to receive the plunder from inside and hand it to his comrades, two or three of whom are always close at hand

armed with short stout sticks. On entering a room either a match is struck to explore, or mustard seed or bajree grains are gently thrown forward. This is to learn the position of any brass or copper pots or any boxes in the apartment, the noise of the seed hitting against them indicating the exact spot, and thus showing in which direction all is clear and no obstacle to be expected for a further advance. One or two members of a gang are always left at the resting-place ; whilst the remainder are away house-breaking, the absent members are represented by stones covered with long dhoturs, to make it appear they are present and asleep. Should any stranger come to the place those present get up, and say the others, being very tired, are sound asleep.

Bowries never administer poison. With the exception of a rich shawl which is taken now and then, not to be retained by themselves, but for presentation to the zemindar, or other chief, of the part of the country they come from, they never steal anything but cash and jewellery. Stolen property is secreted by Malpooras, Marwarras, and Moghyas, by burying a good distance away from where they may be putting up at the time. Delhiwals bury it just below the fire-places made for cooking purposes. Stolen property is never carried by a gang when on the move. It is left at the last "Asen," or halting-place, and

One of the gang is sent back under cover of night to fetch it to the new "Asen," where it is reburied, and moved on next day in the same manner, and so on. All jewellery is at once broken up, and, if possible, melted, and when sufficient amount of plunder is collected, a member or two of the gang are sent off with it by rail or by road to their homes ; having safely delivered it, they return and rejoin the gang. Bowries leave their homes on thieving expeditions (which expeditions are called by them 'Raméth') about the end of October or beginning of November, and freely utilize the railway. The Malpooras and Marwarras take the train generally at Itarsee, Shohagpoor and Badee. The Delhiwals at stations near Delhi. They return to their villages at the commencement of the rains. Some few, who are "wanted" in their own country and are well known, remain behind and spend the rainy seasons in the Deccan, joining gangs when they return in the cold weather.

As stated above, Bowries generally come to the Deccan disguised as Byragees or Gosseins, and the only means of discovering them is to get a sharp Hindoo to watch a suspected gang of religious mendicants at their morning devotions. Bowries do not go through it in the orthodox manner, which can be detected at once by a man knowing the different ceremonies which should be performed.

When food is being prepared by the cook of the party, and a member of the gang joins him in his cooking-place, and is allowed to take away any food and eat it, the conclusion is that the gang are Bowries. Should the party be drinking liquor, any man who understands the Guzeratee language, who may be near the gang, would be sure if they are Bowries to hear them at times converse in their own language. A true Byragee or Gossein catechising them in their prayers and rites, and watching them at their different ceremonies, will often detect them as not being the right sort.

An entrance made into a house at the side of the door-frame is a good sign of Bowries' work, as also the presence of mustard seed or bajree grains on the floor of the room broken into.

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## CHAPTER II.

### TAKENKAR OR TUKKAREE, TRUE CASTE NAME WAGRI OR MOGHYA.

TAKENKARS or Tukkarees are one of the six tribes of Pardhis, who reside in or frequent the Deccan, and are all Hindoos. They are true Bowries or Wagris, and obtained their present name, Takenkar, in these parts, still retaining their caste name of Wagri, by which and also Moghya they are known to one another. "Takenkar" is derived from the Mahratta verb "tankné," to rechisel (stones), and the suffix "kar," doer. The remaining five tribes are also off-shoots of the great Bowrie family. All immigrated into Khandeish, Berar, part of the Nizam's Dominions, Central Provinces, and Deccan many generations ago from Guzerat (*vide* Wagri tribe mentioned by Sherring in Vol. II., page 228). All five tribes speak the same language as the Bowries (or Budhucks) of the north of the present day. Wagri

Takenkars will not intermarry with any of the other Pardhi tribes in the Deccan. They are certainly the most numerous in the countries mentioned of all these tribes. Inveterate robbers and burglars by profession, their ostensible occupation is to repair and point mill-stones. From long residence in these parts they have assimilated themselves to the common Mahratta Kunbis in dress. By going about pretending to mend "chukkies" they get their information as to houses to attack and rob. They also employ spies. Wagri Takenkars live in huts on the outside or skirts of a village, so that their movements may not be noticed by neighbours. They cultivate also. For purposes of crime this tribe partitioned off the countries they now reside in into districts. Each district has its own headman, whom they style "Mehtur." He does not organize crime, but merely settles caste disputes, and receives a share of any property taken by men belonging to his "zillah." The originators and organizers of expeditions are generally the well-to-do Wagris—men who possess fields and other property. In former days men of one district never committed crime in another "Mehtur's" preserve, but confined themselves to their own district. Now, however, this rule is relaxed, and the whole country is considered common to all. Wagris confine their operations to their own neighbourhood within a distance of from thirty to

ifty miles. They never wander into distant countries or purpose of crime, as the Bowries of the north do. Expeditions are planned when members of the tribe collect for a marriage or any religious festival. Plans then formed are carried into execution, often many months afterwards. Swords and spears are almost always carried when going to commit crime. They sometimes organize large dacoities on rich people's houses in villages. On these occasions they will admit Dhers, Mangs and Mahomedans into the gang. Some particular tree (generally a "neem," for it is held sacred by them) near the village to be attacked is named as the rendezvous place, where the members of the gang assemble at the appointed time from their respective villages. Only some are armed, others carry torches, and the rest clubs. Fire-arms are rarely used now-a-days. On entering the village the dacoits make straight for the house to be attacked, break open the doors, and enter. Some of the gang, each with a supply of stones, are placed at the corners of the streets leading to the house. It is their duty to keep off any villagers who may be bold enough to attempt to come to the rescue. Wagri Takenkars have been known to practise great cruelties towards the inmates of houses they attack, to force them to point out where treasure or jewellery is hidden. Should any Wagri member of the gang be captured, killed, or wounded in an expedition,

some of his brother-castemen proceed at once under cover of night to his house and throw a twig of the "neem" tree either on the roof or in front of the door. This is done in dead silence, and is meant as a sign for the inmates on awakening in the morning that something has happened to their relation and to keep silence. An instance is on record of a wife, and of a mother : both refused to recognize the corpse of a Takenkar—their husband and son respectively—killed in a case of burglary, even after it had been identified by deceased's brother-villagers (Kunbis and Dhers, &c.). This was to try and establish that Wagri Takenkars had not committed the crime. For the purpose of committing violent crime a Wagri wraps a dhotur tightly round his body, two corners being tied in a knot between the shoulder-blades, and the remaining two in the small of the back. The face is muffled, showing only the eyes. Should there be occasion to speak whilst committing a dacoity or highway robbery, Hindustani is invariably used. Takenkars are most expert burglars. An entrance made by one of this tribe may readily be recognized by the breach, which is dug sloping gently downwards into the house, the sides being quite straight, not inclining inwards at the end, as in an ordinary burglar's work. Great care is taken to smooth it off the whole way through, which gives it a very neat appearance. Marks

of the sharp point of the instrument (called by them "Kutturna") used for this purpose, is noticeable all round. Wagris, unlike other burglars, always enter a house *feet* foremost, and that is why the breach is made with a downward slope, in case the groundfloor might be lower than the outside level. Takenkars are very particular about secreting stolen property. It is next to useless to search their houses : they rarely keep any in them. It is generally buried close under the back wall of the house, or near the pegs to which they tie their cattle. If, however, the possessor be a well-known criminal, the property is buried at a great distance, generally in a field. Takenkars have their own particular and trusted goldsmith receivers of stolen property, and to no others will they offer it for sale. Men of this tribe are much addicted to stealing grain and cotton during harvest time, which they promptly dispose of, by mixing with the produce of their own or brother-castemen's fields. They are very fond of running down wild pig with their dogs, and also net hares, from which they are called Pardhis in some parts of the country. Great numbers of Wagris are employed as village policemen in Khandaish, Berar, and some parts of the Nizam's Dominions.

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## CHAPTER III.

### LUNGOTEE PARDHI, TRUE CASTE NAME “BOWRIE.”

LONG subsequently to the moving southward of the Wagris (Takenkars) another branch of the great Bowrie family followed them, and settled in parts of Khandeish and the northern portion of Berar, and carried on their professional pursuits of dacoity and highway robbery and burglary with impunity, till they, with the Wagris, became the terror of the simple agriculturists of these parts. To save their villages from the depredations of these two new classes of robbers, patels entered into written agreements that their villages might be spared on payment of black-mail, and they enlisted numbers of both tribes as village watchmen. In those days British rule had not extended to Berar, and old agreements drawn up between villagers and these robbers are now preserved as curiosities in some towns. The

new immigrants were fond of snaring game, and of shooting, so were called Pardhis, from the Mahratta word "paradh," "chase," but many others were also termed thus, and from the fact that these men wore, and do still, a lungotee,\* were named Lungotee Pardhis in contradistinction to all other Pardhis.

As a rule they are a fine race of men with a physiognomy peculiar to themselves and very similar to the Meywarees or Phansee Pardhis (who are also Bowries), the professional game-snarers, a wandering race, who are to be met with in almost every district and weekly village market. The Lungotee Pardhi is simple in his clothing, a dhotur round his loins, a white sheet over his shoulders, and a similar-coloured turban on his head completes his toilet. The hair of the head is cut once when quite young and never again touched by scissor or razor. When first the tribe reached these parts the women wore laingas or petticoats, a tight jacket (cholee) fastened behind like Rajpoot women, and a cloth over the head ; but time and intercourse with Mahratta-speaking people caused a gradual change in costume, and now the saree and ordinary cholee have usurped their original dress.

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\* Strip of cloth between the legs and fastened both before and behind to a cord round the waist.

+ Goddesses from all p. ix

Perhaps in no race except the Meywarees, who are very similar in their ideas, is so much reverence paid to their principal deity, "Devi," as by these people. Every house has its Devi in silver. Women may not wear silver anklets, because the household goddess is of that metal; they may not wear anything red about them, because Devi is placed on a ground of that coloured cloth. Cots may not be slept on, because Devi is supposed to always rest on one: a shoe is not allowed inside a hut for fear of offending the goddess. Sacrifices of rams and young buffaloes are offered at regular periods each year, on which occasions a great feast is held. Unlike the Takenkars, polygamy is allowed. On the death of a brother the surviving eldest brother must marry and support the widow. Lungotee Pardhis are not a wandering race, but live in substantially built huts in the outskirts of villages, so that their movements may not be watched by inquisitive neighbours. They readily enlist as village watchmen, but will not take any service which involves leaving their homes in their adopted villages. British rule, with her stern determination to put down crime, has much calmed the predatory habits of this tribe, and violent crime is not practised so much as a profession by them now as in days gone by. The love of plunder, though, has not yet died out in the breasts of these sons of a race of

in vetebrate robbers. Dacoity is still committed by some o' the older men, but the new generation have taken to burglary in its stead. At this they are very expert and successful. The breach in the wall is very similar in appearance to that made by Takenkars, though not so great in finish. So afraid are they now of trusting one another, that it is rare for more than two or three to undertake a burglary together, very often it is done single-handed. In dacoities men of other castes are allowed to join the gang and share in the plunder. As a rule, they go fully armed, and are very reckless in the use of weapons. Faces are invariably muffled. Stolen property is never brought home at first, but is buried at once in some secluded spot, and there it remains for months, till the hue and cry of its loss has calmed down, when it is unearthed and shared.

Should one of the gang be killed, his widow and children, if he has any, get full share due to the deceased, and the latter are supported by the rest of the tribe till able to provide for themselves. Unlike the Wagris (Takenkars), these people are not taking so much to agricultural pursuits, they prefer hunting and snaring game and taking service as village watchmen. Great numbers are to be found in this latter capacity in many parts of northern Khandeish and Berar. It is curious the race

has not spread more southward, but they seem to hold tenaciously to the parts of the country their ancestors originally settled in. Amongst themselves, like the Wagris, they still use the Guzeratee language. The slang of these two tribes is similar, and many of the words are those employed by the Budhucks of the north, thus showing without doubt their Bowrie origin.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CHEETAWALLA PARDHI—TRUE CASTE NAME, BOWRIE.

THESE people, who are Hindoos, derive their name from the fact of their being the snarers of the cheeta or hunting-leopard, which is tamed and sold to rajahs and chiefs, many of whom keep members of this tribe in their pay for the sole purpose of supplying them with these animals. Cheetawalla Pardhis are a branch of the great Bowrie tribe, still retaining the language (Guzeratee) and many of their customs. They will intermarry with Lungotee Pardhis and with some other of the Pardhi tribes. In appearance they are very like the Lungotee Pardhis and wear the lungotee, but unlike them in mode of living, inasmuch as they are a true wandering tribe, and are a wilder-looking set. The headmen are styled “naiks.” During the rains they retire into the Nizam’s territories and build themselves

temporary sheds. Directly the monsoon ceases they commence wandering about the country. Pals, &c., are never used ; they put up under trees. Ostensibly they are game-snakers, but must not be confounded with Phansee or Pal Pardhis, who are a totally different tribe, and who are looked upon with great contempt. The men never cut or shave the hair on their heads. Sometimes a necklace of onyx beads is worn. The women dress like the ordinary Maharatta female, but wear necklaces of round glass beads of a dark colour with yellow about them. Children until attaining a certain age invariably have on onyx bead necklaces. Both men and women have a very dirty, untidy appearance. Men never take service as "jaglias" (village police), or of any nature which involves leaving the tribe. They are professional grain and cotton thieves, and rob standing crops. Should they come across an open house with no occupant inside, it is immediately entered and anything hands can be laid on is stolen. Violent crime, burglary, cattle-lifting and picking pockets are never resorted to. Small low-wheeled carts will generally be found with these people, which are used for the double purpose of carrying captured cheetas and their goods and chattels. Occasionally a tame cheeta may be seen with them. He is used for supplying antelope flesh to the gang ; all surplus meat is sold. Unlike Phansee or Pal Pardhis,

Bullocks or cows are never used whilst snaring game. If these people remain long in one place holes are dug in the ground. The orifice is small, but the inside is scooped out, so as to form a round deep réceptacle. This is used for putting stolen property into. The mouth is carefully covered up and the ground nicely smoothed, and one of the gang sleeps over it. Often several of these holes will be found in each resting-place. The best mode for discovering them is by tapping the ground with a stick, when a hollow sound betrays the exact spot.

## CHAPTER V.

### SOONARIA.

SOONARIAS of Bundelcund, a very enterprising race of hereditary pilferers and pickpockets, possessing a regular code of signals, are essentially day thieves, it being an article of faith among them never to steal between sunset and sunrise, and this law is religiously observed. They reside in the Bundelcund and Bhopal territories, and leave their homes in large gangs about November or December each year. *En route* to their destined fields of exploit, which exist in all parts of India, they break up into smaller gangs and thus advance in more extended order, freely utilizing the railway whenever it runs in the direction they wish to take. Every gang has a leader, whom they style "mooktiar," and is accompanied by a number of boys; women never leave their homes. It is through the instrumentality of the boys that thefts are committed.

They will steal anything and everything, from the most valuable jewels and pearls and silks to old penknives and rags ; nothing is too insignificant. All plunder is sold as soon as possible and converted into cash. They have regular purchasers of stolen property in the different countries they visit, in rendezvous villages, fixed on before leaving their homes. Most Soonarias return to their native villages in time for the Holi festival, when all the proceeds of plunder they may have collected, which often amount to large sums, are fairly distributed, having first taken an oath that the amount for division is all that was obtained. A few valuable shawls or cloths are kept for presentation to the chiefs in whose lands they reside. Soonarias, when out on an expedition, do not use tents or huts, but put up under trees, or sometimes in temples, always some distance from towns or villages. There is no peculiarity about the costume by which they can be recognized, except that they almost always possess a bag with a running string to it and which is carried over the shoulder. It is usually made of red material lined with coarse cloth. This bag has many partitions in it, for the reception of tobacco, pipe, flint and steel, betel leaves, comb, penknife, &c.

These professional thieves generally frequent large fairs and weekly markets. Their principal mode of

operation is peculiar to themselves. A Soonaria, well dressed to present an appearance of respectability, accompanied by a couple of boys, and sometimes also a man, fleet of foot, enters the fair. The attendants pretend to be strangers to him and follow at a distance. Having selected a stall which he considers would suit the purpose, the leader enters into conversation with the owner. One of the boys, having casually strolled up, stands either close in front, or by him, the others being some distance off. The merchant produces his goods for inspection, the stranger is difficult to please, and all the articles lie about in front of him. He begins to scratch his head as if perplexed (this is the sign for the boy to be on the alert), and by conversation attracts the attention of the merchant, and on getting an opportune moment either touches the boy with his elbow or makes a sign with it, when the young urchin adroitly purloins, unseen by the owner, whatever is nearest, and slips quietly away, and immediately passes the stolen article to the other boy or to the man, who runs off in an opposite direction with it. The Soonaria calmly leaves the stall, expressing his regret that there is nothing in the shop he likes, and generally it is not till the booth-keeper begins to collect his outspread goods that he misses whatever has been stolen. If, however, the loss is discovered before the Soonaria leaves, he condoles

with the shopkeeper on his loss, he being never suspected. In this manner valuable shawls, cloths and strings of pearls, &c., are stolen. The same system is pursued in shops in towns. They have also various other modes of stealing. On observing a party of travellers cooking, one of these thieves goes close up, and sitting down tells some doleful tale, and thus attracts their attention, upon which an accomplice, who is sauntering near them, smartly appropriates a lota or anything which may be handy. Another method, and one usually adopted at village markets, is for a party of them to feign drunkenness and create a disturbance, often pretending to strike one another and uttering cries of pain. Inquisitive stall-owners, native-like, leave their goods unguarded and run to see what is going on ; accomplices on the watch have it all their own way, and pilfer what they can find.

It is generally customary in this country, when well-to-do men or women enter tanks or rivers to bathe, to leave their money and valuables with their clothes on shore, in charge of some relation or friend. Two Soonarias, one following the other at a convenient distance, saunter unconcernedly along the water's edge. On approaching the spot the front man, going close by the person sitting with the valuables, pretends to put

away some money in his waistcloth, and drops some coppers as if by accident, and passes on dropping more ; in almost every instance the guardian rises and picks up the coin and pockets it ; seeing more fall, that is appropriated too, the acute thief continuing to entice the person away to a sufficient distance to enable his rear companion to come up and run away with the now unguarded valuables.

Soonarias also cut away pockets in crowds, take jewellery off the persons of children on like occasions, steal clothing left unguarded on banks of rivers or sides of tanks, and pilfer anything they can find. A Soonaria, like most pickpockets, can rarely fix his eyes on one when conversing. Dacoity, highway robbery, or burglary are never committed by these people, in fact an oath is taken by them before the goddess Devi that they will never commit any other crime but that of theft, and right well do they carry out the terms of their oath.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### BUNJARA, CALLED IN SOME PARTS OF THE DECCAN "LUMBHANA."

BUNJARAS are a well-known class in Central and Southern India. Moving about with large droves of pack bullocks, they are the grain and salt carriers of the country. The introduction of railways has spoilt their trade, and numbers are now settling down to a quiet agricultural life. They are divided into four tribes, viz., "Muttoorias," who are Hindoos, and Chuttrees by caste ; "Lubhanas," who are Hindoos, and Chuttrees by caste ; "Charuns," who are Hindoos, and Rajpoots by caste ; "Dharees," who are Mahomedans, and are the "bhats" (bards) of the Bunjara tribes. There is also a class called "Dhalias," who are Bunjara Mangs. Each tribe is divided into clans or tandas, with a naik at the head of each. The "Charuns" (by far the most numerous in these parts) and the "Dharees" are the most criminal

tribes. The various kinds of crime to which they are addicted will be noticed further on. "Muttoorias" and "Lubhanas" confine themselves to cattle-lifting and kidnapping. "Muttoorias" may be recognized from the others by the fact of the males wearing the "janwa" or sacred thread, and by the costume of the women, which is generally a blue saree. The married women wear their hair in a peculiar manner, tied up in a knot on the top of the head and fixed there by a button. The difference between "Lubhanas" and "Charuns" is that the women of the former wear sarees, and the latter use the lainga. The report on the Bunjara tribes by Mr. N. Cumberlege, of the Berar Police, printed in 1869, deals fully on their divisions, sub-divisions, and various ceremonies. The following notes are only intended to give a few hints on the manner in which the criminal class, viz., "Charuns" and "Dharees," commit crime and secrete property.

In the palmy days of the tribe dacoities were undertaken on the most extensive scale. Gangs consisting of 40, 50, or even 150, well-armed men, would go long distances from their tandas or encampments for the purpose of attacking houses in villages or treasure-parties, or wealthy travellers, on the highroads. Gradually these gangs got broken up. Several members, turning

approvers to the Thuggee and Dacoity Department, denounced hundreds of their companions in crime. The more intimate knowledge the police have obtained concerning the habits of this race, and the old reticence on the part of the Bunjaras themselves against giving information concerning their fellow-caste men having been broken through, have all aided, it may be said, in quite stopping the heavy class of dacoities Bunjaras used to commit in days gone by. At present they confine themselves to dacoities on a small scale on highways and on houses in out-of-the-way hamlets, to highway robbery, cattle-lifting, sheep-stealing, kidnapping children, cutting away bags of grain, bales of cloth and cotton from off carts at night when moving along roads, or when halted for the night, to carrying off bales of cloth or silk at large fairs and encampments, and to grain and cotton thefts during harvest time. All these are crimes "Charun" and "Dharee" Bunjaras are addicted to. They do not, as a rule, commit burglary, but once they take to it are keen and successful. Information is imparted to them by friendly liquor-vendors, resident Bunjaras employed in villages as herdsmen or cultivators, and by village Marwarees. More frequently, however, a party, bent on committing crime, sit out of sight on the side of a road much frequented by travellers, and take their chance by waiting until a suitable opportunity

offers itself. When a gang have determined on committing dacoity or highway robbery (should the case be a heavy one), they sometimes before starting consult a "bhuggut," or priest, but this is not done for ordinary cases. In former times certain ceremonies of consulting the spirits of Mittoo "Bookia" were performed, but it is now, as a rule, dispensed with. The gang adjourn to the nearest liquor shop and indulge freely; if desirous of great caution, all the members will not go to the shop, but keep out of sight and send one or two to bring away the spirits in bottles. Should the destination selected for their exploit be far, cooked food is taken with them. In British territories at present arms are very rarely carried on these occasions. Each man takes a good stout stick ("gedee") which is generally broken from a "khair" or "unjun" tree *en route*. The bark is peeled off, which causes it to look whitish and fresh. These "gedees" are either hidden away, burnt, or destroyed in some way when no longer needed. For the commission of road dacoities or highway robberies woody or hilly parts are chosen, so as to ensure a safe retreat. The attack is generally commenced by stone-throwing, and then a rush is made, and "gedees" freely used, the victims almost invariably being struck about the head or face. Whilst plundering Hindustani is sometimes spoken, but, as a rule, they never utter a

word, but grunt signals to one another. Dhoturs are braced up tightly, nothing is worn on the body, and faces are generally muffled, but if the encampment be a long way off, this precaution is usually dispensed with. In house-dacoities men are posted at different corners of streets, each with a supply of well-chosen round stones (which they carry with them from a distance), to keep off any people who may attempt to come to the rescue of those attacked. The main body of the gang rush on with cries of "deen, deen," effect an entrance, and should their tanda be some distance away, carry off everything they can lay their hands on; but, on the other hand, should the tanda be near, only jewellery, cash and cloths are taken. After committing a crime they make for their encampment by unfrequented paths, but, to avoid being followed, generally take a direction the opposite to the right one for a couple of miles, here drop a cloth or two or some other article, but always of the stolen property, and then double round direct for their proper destination. This is done to throw the police off the correct track. Bunjara dacoits will also sometimes, after the commission of a crime, make straight towards a tanda against which they have a grudge, leaving palpable tracks along the path, so as to lead the police to believe that the members of that particular encampment are the culprits. Having thus, as they imagine, cast

suspicion on their enemies, they make the best of their way to their own tanda. Recognizable stolen property is not brought into an encampment, but is buried in the jungles. Hollows in the side of nullahs made by the rush of waters are favourite places wherein they bury cloths, and sandy beds of nullahs for copper, brass, or iron pots, &c., under large stones, also hillsides, and the top of old machans (used for watching crops from) are used for secreting stolen property. Cotton, when not taken direct to the receiver's house, is hidden away in jungles, the material being well covered with green leaves, or in kurbi stacks some distance from the tanda. Sometimes old dry wells, especially those in deserted village forts, are used for secreting bales of cotton, cloths and bags of grain. Should the gang have a trustworthy receiver, all stolen property is taken direct to his house and handed into his safe keeping. Liquor-shop keepers, coppersmiths with whom they may be intimate, and frequently Marwarees and patels of villages are their receivers, and dispose of the property for them. Bunjarras are very expert cattle-lifters, sometimes taking as many as a hundred head and even more at a time. This is chiefly practised in hilly countries, or where hills and jungles are close at hand. Expert professionals, however, do this in the plains, anywhere and everywhere. Secreting themselves, they watch for the herdsman to have

his usual midday doze, and till the cattle have strayed away a little distance from him. Seizing the opportunity, as many as have strayed furthest are driven off to a great distance and secreted in ravines and woods. Sometimes men of several tandas will form a confederacy and keep all their stolen cattle together in one place, secreted as just mentioned. If questioned by any passer-by, the answer is that the animals belong to patels or villagers, given in their charge to graze, and, as this is done every day, the questioner thinks nothing more of it. After a time the cattle are quietly disposed of by ones and twos to people at a distance from whence they were stolen. Many are sold at weekly markets. One mode of stealing cattle is setting fire to a village at night in five or six places simultaneously. A whole gang, of perhaps over a hundred Bunjaras, being in waiting in small groups all around it, knowing that the first thing a Mahratta will do, before looking to the safety of either his family or himself, is to let loose his cattle, they await the animals, which come stampeding from the fire and are easily driven off twenty or thirty miles before the trick has been discovered. In this way nearly a whole village is burnt down, women and children beat their breasts and cry, the men grope about, trying to find and save any jewellery which they fancy might have been dropped, and forget all about their cattle for hours,

until their chance of ever seeing them again has gone.

Another favourite trick of lifting cattle is this :— Should they, while on the march with their own droves, notice two or three bullocks or cows grazing by the roadside untended, these are driven into the midst of their own pack bullocks and taken on with them. Animals thus stolen are usually sold to butchers. Once upon a time Bunjaras would never sell to a butcher, but now it is an every-day occurrence. Sometimes picketed cattle in villages, or with travellers resting on the roadside, are stolen at nights. The stealing of sheep and goats from their pens at night is generally performed in the following manner. Dark nights are selected. Four or five men surround the pen and hide a little distance off, one or two others approach the sheep on all fours, jumping towards them in imitation of wild animals. This alarms the flock, they break away and scatter over the country ; each man in hiding seizes a goat or sheep and walks off with it. Should, however, the shepherds notice that men, and not wild animals, are frightening their flock, they use their slings. When this is done the Bunjaras throw off all reserve, rush on them from every side, pelt them with stones, rob them and carry off their animals by force. Occasionally no attempt is made to do the thing quietly, but an open attack is made,

commencing with the usual stone-throwing. During the day they have a habit of stealing sheep or goats. Observing the direction in which a flock is grazing, the Banjara selects a bush or a large stone or a nullah, whichever may be in his way, and secretes himself. For fear he may be noticed, he pretends to dig up roots or to be collecting gums, &c. On the approach of one of the animals near him he watches for the shepherd's attention to be directed in the opposite way, the sheep or goat is instantly thrown, both forelegs are crossed over the back of its neck, tongue pulled out sufficiently far to enable him to run a long thorn through the tip (this prevents the animal drawing it back, and thus ensures its silence), and it is left lying on the ground under the hiding-place the Bunjara used. All this is done in a few seconds, and he moves away in the most unconcerned manner. The shepherd, ignorant of the fate that has befallen one of his flock, and intent on watching his charge, generally passes on without noticing the helpless animal, which is afterwards carried away by the Bunjara. Acting in the same manner, the sheep or goats are sometimes killed (by breaking the neck by a sudden jerk), instead of being left alive.

When it is intended to steal grain during harvest time, a suitable "khullah" (spot selected in harvest time

in a field where grain is thrashed and heaped) is selected during the day. About three o'clock in the morning, when watchmen are generally asleep, the gang approach the "khullah" by stealth. One or two armed with sticks stand over the slumbering watchers, the rest, each having a blanket or a sheet, help themselves to the grain. Should the Bunjaras be able to get away without awaking the watchmen well and good ; should, however, the men awake, they are instantly attacked, beaten, and themselves, in addition to the grain, robbed. The same system is pursued as regards cotton. Sometimes, however, Bunjaras won't try and steal quietly, but make a regular attack with stones. Standing crops are robbed at nights. Before the cotton is ready to be picked, the receiver is decided on, and arrangements regarding price to be paid, &c., agreed on. One old man is left at night to beat the "nagara" (drum), and a few boys and girls shout their best at the tanda. All the remainder move off with their bullocks and come to a place near the field to be robbed. Some pick the cotton, some carry the bundles, some dispose of it in the saddle bags, and directly five or six packs are full these are driven off. The loads are taken the same night to the receiver (generally a Marwaree), and secreted by him before morning. The rapidity with which Bunjaras can pick cotton is almost beyond belief. Tobacco leaves cut from the plants and

left in the fields to dry, and hemp stacked by the water-side to be cleaned, are also frequently stolen by them. In cases of dacoity or highway robbery, cowrie shells, bits of cloth, and sometimes a sling, are often dropped by them in their hurry. As this tribe are much addicted to drinking before an exploit, freshly smoked leaf pipes in the neighbourhood of the scene of crime are a pretty good tell-tale.

If Bunjaras have committed a dacoity or highway robbery, a spot either in the jungle or in a ravine, within a mile all round, will be found where the gang have assembled and examined their spoils, and some of the property, considered useless, will be found cast away by them. As a rule, these people do not commit crime anywhere near where their clan may have been encamped at the time, except burglary, and this they frequently commit in the village nearest their tanda. Should men of a distant party be the culprits, Bunjaras in the immediate neighbourhood will be sure to know of it in time, and, if properly humoured, will give information. In cotton thefts the route taken can generally be traced by pieces of loose cotton on the ground, or adhering to the twigs of bushes or trees, and as Bunjaras are, as a rule, bad carriers of weights, spots will be met with where the bundles have been put down for a rest and a smoke. It is customary to tear stolen cloth into equal pieces, and each

member of the tanda gets one. These are hidden away in the different pals, or tents, or sewn into bullock packs. Stolen dhoturs and turbans may always be recognized by the fact that the edging has been torn off. The edging, or pieces of it, especially if of silk, may be found in the bags in the possession of the women, in which little odds and ends are stowed away. Jewels are often found not only in the packs, but in cooking-pots on the fire. If a woman has no time to hide them on her person, and there are a number or even one piece to conceal, a little water is put into a cooking-pot or caldron and it is put on the fire with the jewel or jewels in it, and an old hag, putting in a handful of flour or anything handy, goes on stirring it up with a spoon, to make believe she is cooking some food. Should a fight have taken place in the commission of any crime and one of the Bunjaras have been wounded, his fellow-caste men endeavour to keep him out of sight, and many patels will be found by them ready to come forward and swear the man is suffering from some disease and is too ill to be seen. Sometimes a wounded man is sent away, and an excuse is made that he has gone to see a friend, or search after missing cattle. Bunjaras do not assume disguises.

Throughout the Mahratta-speaking countries, but more particularly in the centre division of the Bombay

Presidency, a race called "Wunjaras" are to be found. These people must not be mistaken for those above described. They are quite distinct, having neither language, manners, nor thoughts (except perhaps for crime) in common with the Bunjaras. They are permanent residents of villages, whereas these latter are a wandering class. Being a true Mahratta-speaking tribe, they have also adopted the customs and costumes of the people of those countries. In former days "Wunjaras" were most inveterate dacoits and highwaymen, and followed the trade as a profession. These crimes are still practised by them, but not to such a degree, as they are gradually settling down to a quiet agricultural life. A great many are patels of villages, and live peaceably on the ill-gotten gains of their forefathers.

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## CHAPTER VII.

**MOOLTANEE, TRUE CASTE NAME KAYNJUR, AND KNOWN BY BUNJARAS AS  
“KAYNJUR.”**

KAYNJUR Mooltanees are Bunjaras of the Mahomedan persuasion, speaking the same language as the Bunjaras, and many possessing Hindoo surnames. These people, it appears, severed themselves from the parent family by embracing Mahomedanism in the days of the early Mahomedan Emperors of Delhi. As amongst their Hindoo brethren, the leader of a tanda is styled “Naik.” The men adopt the same costume as that worn by ordinary village Mahomedans. Beards are never shaved, and the hair of the head is worn long at the back. The costume of the females is very like that of the Bunjara women of the “Charun” tribe, except that so many brass ornaments are not worn. Mooltanees, like the

Bunjaras, are a wandering tribe, and move about with large droves of pack-bullocks, conveying grain, &c., from place to place. This tribe comes from Baroda territory, and the western parts of Rajputana and Bhopal, in which countries are their periodical encampments during the rainy season. When moving about the country they live in pals (small tents) and encamp exactly like Bunjaras. They do not, as a rule, penetrate far south, but keep to Khandaish, the Central Provinces, Berar, and the northern portion of the Nizam's dominions. The Kaynjur Mooltanees are professional dacoits, highway robbers and cattle-lifters, but not burglars. They are most addicted to robbing opium, and may rightly be termed "opium dacoits." This drug, or other merchandise, is more generally robbed while in transit along the principal roads, either whilst the convoy is on the move or encamped. These Mooltanees have been known to attack and rob Bunjara encampments, and carry off the grain their Hindoo brethren were conveying from one place to another.

There is another tribe of Mooltanees, who must not be confounded with those described above, the true *Mookeree* Mooltanees, known popularly as Lukdi (wood) Mooltanees, who are a *non-criminal* class and live permanently in huts close to towns or villages. In manners

and language they are the same as the others, but they keep fewer cattle and trade in firewood and timber. Kaynjur Mooltanee often assume the name of Mookerees, but this is merely done that they may be considered and passed as of the non-criminal class. True Mookerees have their own Kazees, whereas Kaynjurs have not, and should the services of a Kazee be required for any ceremony one from the nearest village is called in.

*Chuggras* are another tribe of Mahomedan Bunerjas, the prototypes of the Kaynjur Mooltanee, and are a true criminal class. The costume of the females of both tribes is exactly alike, as is also that of the males. Moving about with large droves of pack-bullocks (they are also carriers of grain and salt), they are not often met with in Berar, but frequently so in the Central Provinces. Their "Koodees," or rainy season encampments, are chiefly in Khandeish, Guzerat, Malwa, north-eastern parts of the Central Provinces, and northern parts of the Nizam's dominions, and generally situated in the hilly parts of those countries. Unlike Kaynjur Mooltanee, Chuggras are addicted to dacoities on houses more than on highroads. They are also much given to stealing bags of grain or bales of cloth from off carts when putting up for the night. If disturbed whilst in the act, the cartmen are at once attacked.

All the three tribes mentioned above eat and drink together, and speak the same language (*viz.*, Bunjara), but do not intermarry. Chuggras and Kaynjur Mooltanees consort together, but not so the Mookeree Mooltanees, who keep entirely to themselves. The only means, by appearance, of telling the difference between this last and the other two tribes is by the costume of the women. Those of the non-criminal class wear *long laingas* and *cholees*<sup>o</sup> ornamented with small pieces of silk and bits of silver tinsel on the sleeves, whereas the females of the two criminal tribes wear short *laingas*, like Bunjara women, and the *cholees* are unornamented. The cut of the *cholees* of all three tribes is the same as the Bunjaras. Female infanticide is practised by the Chuggras, girls for marriage being obtained from the ordinary Mahomedans of the country.

<sup>o</sup> Bodices.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### KOLHATEE.

SEVERAL generations ago, the exact period is unknown, a race of Hindoos known in these parts as "Kolhatees" spread themselves south. Investigation goes to show that they are the same as the "Beriahs" of Central India and the "Domras" of Bengal. The race owes its origin to Central India and Guzerat, the language of that country being their mother-tongue to this day. They belong to the great Sansya family of robbers, and claim their descent from Mullanoor, a brother of Sainsmull.\* There are two tribes, viz.,

DOOKUR KOLHATEES.

KAM OR PAL KOLHATEES.

The former are a non-wandering criminal tribe,

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\* The descendants of these two brothers, from whom are said to have sprung so many of the predatory tribes, eat, drink and smoke together, and they also band together for the purpose of crime, but they may not intermarry. From Sainsmull, the elder brother, sprang Bowries, Budhucks, Kunjurs, Monghyas, Wagris, &c., their names varying with the country they inhabit. The descendants of Mullanoor, the other brother, are the Kolhatees, Beriahs and Domras, &c., who are variously named according to the country in which they now reside.

whereas the latter are a non-criminal wandering class. Depraved in morals, the males of both tribes subsist to a great extent by the prostitution of some of their females, though let it be said to the credit of the former that they are not so bad as the latter. They labour for themselves by cultivating land, by taking service as village watchmen, or by hiring themselves to villages to destroy that pest of Indian farmers, the wild hog, and, above all, they are professional robbers. Kam Kolhatees, on the other hand, are a lazy good-for-nothing class of men, who, beyond making a few combs and shuttles of bone, will set their hands to no kind of labour, but subsist mainly by the immoral pursuits of their women. At every large fair may be seen some of the portable huts of this tribe, made of rousa grass, the women, decked in jewels and gaudy attire, sitting at each door, whilst the men are lounging lazily at the back. The males of the Dookur Kolhatee tribe are a fine manly set of fellows, and obtained the distinction of "Dookur" (hog) from the fact of their hunting the wild and breeding the domesticated pig. This animal is also offered up for sacrifice on certain occasions. They believe not in the deities of Hindoo mythology, but in the one Supreme, unseen Being. No Hindoo festivals are observed, and worship is only performed in cases of great family trouble or other affliction. The ceremony is simple. A small square piece of ground

is selected, and, having levelled it, it is smoothed with water, incense is burnt thereon and prayers offered up. Sacrifices are only resorted to when invoking the spirits of deceased relatives, for they believe their spirits are about and watch over them always. A boar is offered to a male and a sow to a female spirit. The tribe is divided into sub-divisions, and each sub-division has its own burial-ground in some special spot, to which it is the heart's desire of every Kolhatee to carry, when he can afford it, the bones of his deceased relatives. Children of tender age are buried, but adults of both sexes are burnt. The bones of the latter, after cremation, are collected and buried, pending such time, should it be at a distance, as they can be conveyed to the appointed cemetery with due ceremony. When the time comes, that is, when means can be found for the removal, the bones are disinterred and placed in two saddle bags on a donkey, the skull and upper bones in the right bag, and the leg and lower bones in the left. The ass is then led to the house, where a canopy, made for the occasion, is ready for their reception. The bags are placed in the centre, and high festival, as for a marriage, is held for three days. At the end of this period they are replaced on the donkey, and with tom-toms beating, and dancing-girls of the tribe dancing in front, the animal is led off to the cemetery. On arrival the bags, with the bones in them, are

buried in a circular hole, a stone is placed to mark the spot, and is covered with red pigment and oil, and the spirit of the deceased is considered to be appeased.

The marriage ceremony is very primitive. Brahmins are not employed, and no propitious day is sought. A feast is held, the bride and bridegroom, dressed in new clothes, sitting side by side, grace the dinner, dancing-girls of the tribe dance before them, much liquor is consumed, and the happy couple are considered duly married according to Kolhatee rites. Married women are very moral and faithful, and indiscretions which every day disgrace our civilized world are unknown. It is only a certain proportion of the unmarried females who are brought up as dancing-girls and never marry. Young women may marry at any age ; the older they are the greater the dowry paid. Widows if they wish may remarry. People of any caste may become Kolhatees, and are received into the tribe with open arms. Great numbers of Rajpoots and Mahomedans join them. On the other hand, a great many of the fair but frail sex portion of this caste embrace the Mahomedan faith. The ordeals men and women of this race have to pass through to prove their innocence, if they deny an accusation, are curious. For a woman seven leaves of the peepul tree are placed one over the other in the open palms of both hands. A wet

thread is wound seven times round both hands and leaves. An axe made red-hot is then placed on the leaves and she bears it seven paces forward and throws it into a bundle of thorns. Should the metal have penetrated the leaves and burnt her hands she is guilty, but if not she is considered innocent. For a man it is different. Selecting a trusted friend, he is taken to a river and made to stand up to his middle in water, and a bow and arrow are placed in his hands, the friend waiting on the shore. When all is ready, he shoots the arrow and immediately ducks his head under water, and so should remain till the friend, fleet of foot, runs and fetches the arrow back. If unable to keep under water till this is done, he is pronounced guilty. Although of low caste, nothing of the cow tribe is eaten. The wild cat, mongoose, wild and domesticated pig, jackal, &c., are considered delicacies. The wild hog is hunted by dogs, of which packs are kept for the purpose, the men, armed with spears, following on foot. They are very plucky at attacking a boar ; there is hardly a man of years who does not bear scars received in fights with them. Villagers send great distances for a gang to come and rid their lands of these animals, and pay them in grain for doing so. Hares and other small animals are caught by nets ; some few shoot, and make very good shikarees.

X Dookur Kolhatees have been well known for years to

those acquainted with them as a class addicted to heinous crime. Dacoity, highway robbery, burglary, and thefts of sorts are committed, but never cattle-lifting. Information is imparted to the males by their kinswomen living under the protection of village headmen and others, being gathered by them from their temporary husbands and female friends in the course of conversation. Plans are formed at marriage and other festivals, when men from all round meet. When a dacoity or road robbery has been decided on, all the gang (which is composed of members from different villages) assemble, drink much liquor, and, taking their dogs with them, start off, ostensibly to hunt hog. Having effected their object and buried the plunder, a pig or a hare is killed and brought into the village to make believe they had gone out for no other purpose. Dookur-Kolhatees accuse Kykarees and Wagris of having initiated them in the secrets of burglary, declaring that originally they never stooped to anything lower than dacoity or robbery ; that may be, but they are very successful and adept pupils. A breach formed in a wall by men of this tribe can be recognized by the fact that the sides, instead of being straight all the way through the wall, shelve inwards, the entrance outside being larger than the exit into the room. A "todga" (charm) is always left at the spot, which is supposed to put inquirers off the scent.

Stolen property is either buried a good distance away from their homes, or more frequently made over to the safe keeping of men with whom female members of the tribe may be living. In consequence of these connexions, these individuals are very intimate with the Kolhatees, and are the channel through which plunder is disposed of. Being usually headmen of villages or respectable persons, suspicion rarely rests on them. They also protect and shield these criminals, making detection very difficult. Always ready to come forward to prove an *alibi*, or to swear all were present in their homes, on any particular day or night, they are the best friends Kolhatees possess.

## CHAPTER IX.

KYKAREE, known also as "KORWEE," and "KULKORWEE," and in MADRAS and MYSORE as "KORWURROO."

THESE people are a criminal race well known to the Thuggee and Dacoity Department, and are Hindoos by caste. They are divided into twelve tribes (Kulwas), only four of which, however, are addicted to dacoity, highway robbery and burglary as a profession. Perhaps in no class is heavy crime more completely systematized and adopted as a hereditary profession. They are :—

1. "Gadee-Puttee Kykarees," derived from "gadee," jungle, and "puttee," district, who have a tradition that their ancestors always lived in deep forests.

2. "Concanee Kykarees" are a branch of the above, who had selected the Concan as their field

for plunder, and obtained the name accordingly.

3. "Purbutheegaree Kykarees" are also a branch of No. 1, derive their name from "purbuth," hill or mountain, and "garee," people, their ancestors having, it is said, resided in that style of country.

4. "Deccanee Kykarees," as the name implies, are the tribe who selected the Deccan.

The men of the last are the most daring of all Kykarees.

Every clan of dacoit Kykarees is composed more or less of members of all the above tribes ; they are the only ones of the race who will associate together, have no fixed residence, and are always wandering about the country. The following notes are concerning these four tribes ; the names of the other eight, with their ostensible means of livelihood, are given at the end of this chapter. They are far less criminal, only confining themselves to thieving and picking pockets, &c., and as they are petty criminals, and have not any organized system of committing crime, it has not been considered necessary to say more about them than just sufficient whereby to recognize each tribe.

Gadee-Puttee, Concanee, Purbutheegaree and Deccanee Kykarees are, as has already been mentioned, true wandering tribes. They infest Southern India up to the Nerbudda river, but do not extend much beyond. From their general appearance and language (which is a mixture of Tamil, Telegu and Canarese, with a preponderance of the first) they seem to have obtained their origin in Southern India, and appear to be the great robber family of the south, just as the Bowries are to the north. (It may be observed that all the Kykarees tribes speak one and the same language.) Their sole habitations are small dirty-looking *pals* or *terts*, which, with other goods and chattels, are moved from place to place on the backs of donkeys. A site for encampment is usually chosen some two or three miles away from a village. Women and children always accompany each gang. Their ostensible means of livelihood is basket-making. The men are very black with a south-country cast of countenance, are scantily clothed as a rule, a small piece of cloth round the waist and a dirty old turban complete the costume. Should, however, a man be better off than his brother-castemen, he indulges in a coarse coat and a *dhotur*. The women wear *sarees* tied in the Telingana style, and have brass bangles on both arms. Both men and women are dirty and untidy in appearance. Kykarees are of low

caste, and eat the wild pig, fox, and jackal, &c. The tribes have no particular caste differences. "Gadee-Puttees" and "Deccanees" may intermarry, but none of the others. These dacoit Kykarees have fixed spots to which they resort every year, and it is thus the gangs meet if desired. In the rains they retire to the borders of or into the territories of His Highness the Nizam, build themselves temporary huts, and live on the proceeds of plunder obtained during the cold and hot seasons. Not much crime is committed during the rainy season. Monsoon quarters are broken up after the Dewalee and Dusserah festivals, and the gangs disperse over the country. Before starting, each gang has certain districts apportioned off to it, on reaching which it is broken up into several small parties of from four to fifteen men, but all these gangs keep within a few miles of one another. The headman of a gang is termed a "naik." He is much respected, and his men will do a great deal to save him, even confess to having committed a crime he may be guilty of, so as to go to jail instead of him. A naik's authority in a gang is absolute, and his word is law. Should a naik become ill, none of the party will commit crime ; till he recovers, a temporary one is appointed. Should his illness continue very long, at his request an acting naik is chosen, who is entitled to a headman's share ; the sick leader also gets his full

share. In the event of a naik going to prison a smart man is elected to act for him till he is released. On the leadership of a gang becoming a permanent vacancy owing to death, it is offered to one of the oldest members who may be distinguished for his daring and expertness. Should there be no one in the party who will accept the responsibilities of a leader, the gang breaks up and disperses, the members joining other gangs as each may fancy. Should any member of a party get into trouble it is the naik's duty to do his utmost to obtain his release, and if money is required it is incumbent on every Kykaree of the gang to contribute a share of the sum needed. These contributions are considered debts of honour, and are repaid by the man for whom they were given, on his release. Every male Kykaree has two or three *aliases* to his name. These are periodically changed and new ones allotted. Both sexes are much addicted to liquor, and after a successful exploit there is a feast, at which all get very drunk, and the assembly usually finishes off with a general fight. Kykarees are superstitious to a degree, and believe in lucky and unlucky signs in animals and in themselves, which seem very similar to those looked for and carefully attended to by the thugs and dacoits of old. Rules for the distribution of plunder are very just, and strictly adhered to. The family of a man in prison is taken

care of by the rest of the gang, the wife receiving her husband's share of all stolen property. Men disabled, and thus rendered unable to rob, are supported by the members of the gang, as are also all orphans, till able to provide for themselves. Kykarees are very cunning about committing crime. They generally encamp on the borders of one district and go on long distances into the adjoining one for the purpose, recrossing the border at once to their encampment. A place ten or fifteen miles off from their camp is considered nothing. They do the same with reference to police stations, being intimately acquainted with the limits of each range. After commission of crime, the position of the camp is also changed. It is usually removed fifteen or twenty miles away in the opposite direction. Burglary is committed in the following manner:—Reliable information is obtained by the women and children, who gain admission into houses on the plea of repairing *chukkees* (grind-stones). On the information being approved of by the naik, he details as many of his men (generally three to seven) as he considers sufficient to ensure success. Some men are always left in the camp. Armed with good stout sticks, the party starts; should the distance be great, cooked food is carried. They time themselves to arrive at their destination a little after ten at night. The naik—for it is his specified duty—makes the breach

in the wall ; the entrance is *level* with the ground outside. The instrument used by them is called "silla koloo" or "punsee koloo." It is of iron, steel-tipped, and from eight to seventeen inches long. This implement is held in great reverence by them, and is made the object of worship once a year. Whilst the naik is at work a picked man is with him. The other companions are posted all round, to give the alarm on approach of danger. As in duty bound, the naik enters the house alone (this rule is never broken) and hands out the plunder to his trusted companions outside. On the reappearance of the naik all join him, assist in carrying off the property, and the road towards their encampment is taken. Should they fear that suspicion would point to them, or that their camp is being quietly watched, the booty is buried a long way from it. Otherwise it is carried into the encampment and immediately secreted. If surprised whilst in the act of committing an offence and surrounded, or their retreat cut off, fight is shown, and the sticks with which they are armed are freely used. No other weapons are carried. It is thus that these gang burglaries often devolve themselves into dacoities. When bent on a regular dacoity, Kykarees generally take a rough ladder to the spot to be attacked. It is composed of a pole with sticks tied across it at intervals, projecting just enough on either side to receive

a foot. It is made at night on the road to their destination, and is, as a rule, left behind. It is taken as a precaution in case there may be some walls to scale. The presence of a ladder of the above description at the scene of crime is a pretty sure indication that Kykarees are the culprits. They are much given to stealing fowls, and are very expert at it. The birds are enticed away from their owners' houses by sprinkling grain on the ground. When sufficiently far away the Kykaree stands still and allows the bird to feed close up to him, when it is smartly caught by the head, the neck is instantly wrung, and the bird stowed away in a cloth under his arm. In this manner they will make away with a number of fowls in a very short space of time. Both sexes of these tribes, especially the Gadee-Puttees, obtain money by cheating in a manner peculiar to themselves. A piece of brass bangle is highly polished and placed in flames obtained from the bark of the tamarind tree. After heating several times it assumes the exact hue of gold, in fact so like does the colour become that goldsmiths themselves are often deceived. The pieces of brass thus prepared are offered for sale very secretly as gold, so as to make it appear they are stolen property. The rate asked being cheap, the cupidity of village bunniah and others is roused and they often purchase. Another mode of making money

is to entice a villager, who may express willingness to purchase stolen property, to the encampment. He is told to come alone and bring cash with him. The jewels belonging to the women are shown as stolen property, a bargain is struck, and money paid down at once. A pipe or two are smoked, and after a little conversation the purchaser gets up to depart. Just as he is leaving he is asked for the money for the jewels ; in vain he protests that he had already given it ; he is abused, beaten, and the jewellery forcibly taken from him, and he is told to lodge his complaint with the police if he pleases. This the poor fellow is afraid of doing, lest he might be suspected of being an habitual purchaser of stolen property. All property which has been buried away from the encampment is always brought into camp at nightfall, and taken back and reburied on the approach of day. The ground round the pegs to which the donkeys are tethered, to a depth of two feet, as also the spot on which the saddles, beddings, &c., are placed, are favourite places for burying plunder, also any dirty-looking places where ashes and refuse may have been thrown. Great care is taken to beat down the earth and harden it over buried property, so as to make it appear impossible the earth could ever have been disturbed. The women secrete articles of jewellery about the front folds of their *sarees*, round the waist and under the armpits. Men,

women and children stow away small pieces of jewellery in their mouths. It is a common practice with women and children, should a police officer appear at the camp, to go away on pretence of fetching water and carry off stolen property in the water pots and bury it. Both sexes of all ages are very dexterous at burying articles under the very spot whereon they may be squatting. Cloths are frequently stitched between the folds of pack saddles and coverlets. They are also sewn between the outer material and lining of their tents. The following are the eight remaining tribes :—

1. “Bottee Kykarees” are a wandering class ; their ostensible means of livelihood is making baskets and children’s toys from the leaf of the palm tree, telling fortunes, and selling roots, &c., as medicines. They are thieves and pilferers.

2. “Kothee Kykarees” wander about exhibiting monkeys, whence they derive their designation, “Kothee” being the Telegu for a monkey. (The regular monkey showmen are different, being Mahomedans.) They are thieves and pickpockets.

3. “Punderpooree Kykarees” are those to be met with wherever new roads are being made. They take

contracts on them for sand and moorum, and employ donkeys and ponies in large numbers. They are about the most honest of all the Kykaree tribes. Some few members occasionally commit burglary.

4. "Koochee Kykarees," also known as "Oochla Kykarees," are those who make brushes of straw used by weavers. They also make snares for catching game, and capture large quantities of deer. They are petty thieves and pickpockets.

5. "Pamb Kykarees." Their ostensible means of livelihood is by wandering about, exhibiting snakes, generally green ones.

6. "Telingana Kykarees" are basket-makers and wanderers. They are thieves.

7. "Toobakoo Dhuddoo Kykarees" are not such wandering people as the others. They generally settle for a time in villages, and subsist by singing and begging. They are petty thieves.

8. "Oor Kykarees" can hardly be called a wandering class, for they build themselves huts in villages and settle down for a long period at a time, and obtain a

living by basket-making and repairing grindstones (*chukkees*). Akin to them is another tribe called "Kooth Kykarees," who obtain a livelihood by the prostitution of their females; they also kidnap and sell children. They live in towns and villages, and are considered the lowest of all the Kykaree tribes.

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## CHAPTER X.

### PROFESSIONAL POISONERS.

A class of crime has sprung up in recent years which is becoming very prevalent. Professional poisoners, who practise their diabolical calling of drugging or poisoning travellers and then robbing them, have been known to exist in India for ages past, and still do exist, though happily to a much less degree ; but the poisoning of cartmen for the sake of the cart and bullocks is a crime of recent growth. This class of poisoning is committed by both Hindoos and Mahomedans, and is followed as a profession by those who have taken to it, though it is a matter for congratulation that, as far as at present is known, they are not of any organization. Seemingly afraid to impart the secret to any accomplice, they almost invariably go about singly and carry on their demoniacal pursuits alone ; in very exceptional cases two or even three have been known to have been associated together for the purpose.

Lest they might be discovered, they never remain long in one part of the country, but are continually on the move. After committing three or four murders in, say, a radius of one hundred miles, they decamp and betake themselves to fresh fields many miles off, and do not revisit the original part till an interval of some years has passed, and cart-owners and drivers have forgotten the fate that befel some of their brethren, and been lulled into a sense of security. The poison employed is *arsenic*, and sometimes *datura*. After disposing of the driver, the cart and bullocks are taken to some distant market and sold, by the aid of unsuspecting commission agents, for the sake of a small commission. So cunning are these poisoners that they will rarely venture themselves into the market. The system on which these professionals work is such as never to arouse suspicion in the minds of the unsuspecting cart-owners and drivers, the incident adopted being of everyday occurrence in the country.

The poisoner, dressed in good clothes and passing himself off as a merchant travelling with the object of purchasing grain or cotton, arrives a stranger in a village or town and puts up in the serai. Representing that he has some heavy business transactions to carry on in some distant grain or cotton market, and that he is desirous of hiring a cart and pair of bullocks to take

him there, he is soon offered what he requires by willing hirers of vehicles. Having selected the best, a bargain is struck for conveyance the whole way, a small sum is paid down in advance, and an understanding arrived at that the balance shall be paid on arrival at the destination. The owner of the cart is asked to accompany the merchant, and in the event of his expressing his inability to do so a very trustworthy driver is asked for. Thus, it will be observed, everything is done to lull suspicion. On the journey the driver and his fare become very friendly, and should caste prejudices not interfere they feed together; if this cannot be, the seemingly kind merchant occasionally gives his unsuspecting victim sweetmeats. This familiarity between driver and fare is a common occurrence in India. A suitable distance from the driver's house being attained, an opportunity is seized to administer poison in either food or sweetmeats.

On the symptoms of the poison taking effect appearing, the poor fellow, with many expressions of commiseration at being taken so suddenly ill, is helped into the cart and asked to lie down and is carried on, the poisoner driving the cart himself. On reaching a lonely spot the victim, if by this time dead, is dragged out by means of a piece of cord from the cart fastened round the neck, and the body is cast on the roadside or into an

adjoining field. If the action of the poison has been slower than desired another dose in water is administered as medicine, the poor wretch, half dead, never suspecting foul play at the hands of his kind (?) friend, or if this is not done he is either strangled forthwith by means of a piece of cord, or he is dragged out and his brains dashed out with the nearest stones. This last course is, however, rarely resorted to. When the victim has died outright from the effects of poison or has been strangled, some of these poisoners get rid of the corpse at once ; others, again, carry it about covered by a sheet or dhotur, as if the man were asleep, keeping clear of villages (the more bold not even being so cautious) until decomposition begins to set in, when it is disposed of as already stated. The reason assigned for keeping the body is that, once decomposition sets in, it goes on so rapidly that there is no chance, by the time the body is discovered, of its being kept for recognition. In some instances clothes are left on the corpse, and in others, to avoid identification, they are burnt, and not a single article either of clothing or jewellery is left on the body by which it can be recognized.

Another mode of disposing of the corpse, and considered by some of these demons the safest, is to lay it out under a tree by the roadside at night in a sleeping

atitude with all clothes on, and covered with a sheet or dhotur, to make believe some stranger—a wayfarer—had lain down and died from fatigue or disease. Bodies thus found do not excite suspicion in the minds of the village authorities, as they are found in a natural position. A report is made accordingly to the police, who also agree ; the members of the inquest also think it is nothing unusual, a verdict of “died from natural causes” is recorded, and the body is duly buried. Murders are seldom committed in the same district in which the cart and bullocks have been hired. Not many years ago a notorious poisoner of this stamp was captured by accident, who confessed to no less than eighteen deaths by his own hands, and gloated over the recounting of each case. This miscreant was a Mahomedan, and carried the poison in a silver charm tied on to his arm.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### POONA BHAMPTA.

Bhamptas, who are Hindus, may well be termed the Soonarias of the south. Originally from the Telingana country, these people have settled in large numbers in the Sholapore, Sattara, and Poona districts ; some also in Khandeish. There are whole villages of them in the above districts, and they live well, possessing fields and cattle. Some of the most notorious are wealthy, with lands worth Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000, and reside in large well-built houses. Bhamptas are professional thieves and pickpockets : they have now made the railway their especial resort. They go to great distances on their expeditions : the Punjab to the north, and the Madras Presidency to the south, are frequented by them ; in fact every line of railway is used, and they generally return to their villages with large amounts stolen during these thieving tours. Both sexes are most adept thieves. Except in railway carriages, where the rule is

re axed, they, like the Soonarias, never steal between sunset and sunrise.

Sometimes our towns and large fairs are frequented by them, but as a rule they do not leave the railway. The men get into third class railway carriages, and whilst the passengers are asleep at night, seize their opportunity, and make away with, or cut open bags or parcels which seem likely to contain jewellery, and alight at the first station reached after so doing with the spoil. The women do the same in the females' carriages, and, in addition, take jewellery off the person whilst the unsuspecting victim is asleep, and they are very expert at secreting small articles of value about their persons in such a manner as can only be discovered by female searchers. Men and women dress like Mahrattas, with this exception, that the latter do not bring up their *sarees* between their legs. When a gang start from their homes on an expedition some of the men are extremely well dressed, turbans and shawls being of an expensive kind, and much jewellery worn on their persons, so as to give them the appearance of being wealthy travellers : others are disguised as rich Brahmins. The men almost always have pieces of broken glass in their pockets, and in their mouths they carry a small sharp curved knife (exactly like a sickle in shape) with thread tied

round the handle end. Both are used to cut open bags and pockets, &c. The knife (which they call an *oodmoock*) is secreted in the hollow between the lower jaw and the cheek : this place is regularly prepared for its reception, by keeping a lump of salt there day and night for some time, so as to harden the gums, &c. Bhamptas never commit burglary or violent crime. In towns and villages anything, however trifling it may be, is pilfered. Jewellery is stolen off the persons of children in crowds, and pockets are cut away. Bhamptas have been known to employ chloroform in railway carriages at night on slumbering passengers. The language common to themselves is Telegu, and "Yellamah" is their principal deity.

There is a class of professional pickpockets, residents of Khandeish, Berar, and the Central Provinces, known as "Pathurkars," whose ostensible means of livelihood is to mend "chukkees" or grindstones (not Mahratta Pathurkars, who are different again). There is every reason to believe that they are the descendants of Bhamptas immigrated into these provinces generations ago. The language common to themselves is Telegu. The same rules regarding stealing are observed, and the cast of countenance is the same as the Bhamptas. They also use the small curved knife for cutting open pockets,

and have the same name for it, viz., *oodmook*. Telingee Pathurkars are most expert thieves and pickpockets. Fairs and weekly bazars are much frequented by them. Both males and females pick pockets, steal whatever they can lay hands on, and take jewellery off the persons of children. They have not as yet taken to the railway as a scene for their exploits. The costume of both sexes is like the poorer Kunbi of these parts. Like Bhamptas their chief deity is Yellamah. When met and questioned as to who they are, they will almost invariably reply that they are Beldars or Kamatees.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FAKIR COINER.

This is a class of Fakirs (Mahomedans) who are by profession manufacturers and utterers of counterfeit coin. They come from Goolburga and its neighbourhood, and the Sholapore district. Their "pir" and preceptor lives at Satul Doodnee, near Goolburga. They wear beads round their necks, and their names invariably end with "Shah," thus "Unneershah" and "Khadurshah," and their costume is the same as that of the ordinary Fakir. Hindustani is spoken with a strong Canarese accent, and in the usual Fakir style. In addressing women "Mai" (mother), and men "Data," is uttered in a more than ordinarily cringing manner. The country is traversed by small gangs of from two to six, and boys as a rule accompany them. The Deccan, the Central Provinces and Berar are the parts most frequented. Their homes are left in the beginning of the cold season, and the commencement

of the monsoon generally sees them back. They put up at places usually frequented by Fakirs, at saints' tombs, or in Fakirs' houses in the vicinity of towns or villages. The boys who accompany them are, as a rule, used for passing the false rupees. Women never accompany them. All their goods and chattels are carried by themselves. When questioned as to the class of Fakirs to which they belong the reply is to the "Mudaree" class. When arrested they exhibit no fear, but keep on protesting that they are poor mendicants.

The mode adopted for passing the counterfeit coin is almost invariably the same: the victims selected are generally women. The Fakir, or one of the boys, says he has a number of coppers and is willing to give 17 or 18 annas for a rupee, and that being strangers to the part of the country they don't know the correct change. The offer is accepted. The coppers are counted out and the rupee is asked for. Taking it in his hand, the man dexterously changes it, substituting a counterfeit, and at once says the rupee is bad and he can't take it; the victim, not suspecting anything, either offers another, which is also treated in the same way, and so on until no more genuine ones are remaining, and the Fakir gathers up his change, or, in the first instance, takes up his coppers, and passes on. One of these men

has been known to pass no less than eleven counterfeit rupees into a tanda of Bunjaras in one day. These coiners pass great quantities of false coin during their peregrinations. Large fairs are much resorted to for the purpose; and it is curious how rarely they are detected.

The implements used for the manufacture of base coin are simple. A mould of earth, an iron spoon, a pair of pincers and a small knife constitute the lot. The mould is made of a kind of earth called by them "Sidee Pait Muttee." This is pounded very fine, and worked to a proper consistency with water. A rupee is covered with this prepared earth and well pressed on all sides, and, to take the impression better, it is further tapped all round with a flat piece of wood. A cut is then made through it, going along the edge of the rupee, and a small hole made in the side of the mould, wedge-shaped, to admit of the melted metal being poured in. A mark is also made across the cut mentioned above, to admit of the mould being correctly fixed when ready. The lump of clay is now wrapped over with several layers of rag. A thick coating of clay is put over this again, and the whole lump is put into a fire. When the mould is considered sufficiently baked, the outer layer of clay and the rags are removed, the mould opened and the rupee taken out, and it is

complete. The two pieces are put together and melted substance poured in (this is generally pewter), the false rupee is taken out and perfected by the hand with the small knife, and is then ready for passing. The manufacture of false coin is carried on in lonely places, generally in jungle or waste lands. Counterfeit coin is carried in a lungotee worn by two or three of each gang (the passers). The pockets for holding the rupees are sewn to the inner side of the front part of the lungotee, under the front flap, and tied very tightly.

On a man being searched, the lungotee is undone from the back and allowed to hang down in front ; the inner part, being hidden by the front flap, escapes notice. These people always possess a leather bag, in which on the march they carry their coining implements, and in addition some of the fine earth, loose, and some white metal. When halted all the implements are buried in the neighbourhood of their resting-place. These Fakirs may readily be recognized by their extremely cringing manner and by their Canarese accent. The only time all their implements are with them is when on the journey from place to place.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### KUNJUR OR SANSYA.

KUNJURS are a well-known wandering, predatory race. They are Hindus by caste, and are a branch of the great family of Sansya robbers, who claim their descent from Sainsmull. They are professional dacoits and robbers. There are two branches of Kunjurs addicted to this violent style of crime, who frequent Berar, the Central Provinces, the Nizam's dominions, and the Deccan in general. One of them—Marwaree Kunjurs—wander down even to the southern parts of the Madras Presidency. Kunjurs can always be recognized by the costume of their women and by their encampments. Members of both tribes pass themselves off as Bhats, and to strangers will never confess themselves to be Kunjurs. It would appear that originally they were the Bhats (bards) of the Jat tribe, but their numbers increased, so that, unable any longer to subsist upon the charities of one tribe, they took to robbery, and spread over Rajputana

and then on to the Deccan. The two tribes are known among themselves as—

1, DECCANEE KUNJURS,

2, MARWAREE, OR OONCHALAINGA, OR BYLEWALLA  
KUNJURS.

The former have adopted the Deccan as their home, and do not go out of it ; the second tribe, as their designation implies, come from Marwar. From the fact of their women wearing *short* laingas they are sometimes called Oonchalaingawallas (*short-petticoated people*), in contradistinction to the Deccanees, whose women wear *long* laingas. In the same way they are also known as Bylepardhis, from their habit of stealing bullocks and cows ; the Deccanees confine themselves to stealing ponies and donkeys. It is now endeavoured to describe each tribe separately, and show the means of distinguishing one from the other.

There is a third tribe of Kunjurs, known as "Koocheewalla Kunjurs," who are also a true wandering class. Living in pals they wander about all over the country. They are *not* addicted to crime as a profession, and should not be confounded with their criminal namesakes. A livelihood is obtained by selling "koochees," large brushes, which they make of the roots of the kus grass. These koochees, from which they derive their name, are

extensively used by weavers for clearing the threads when entangled on the looms. Head ropes and heel ropes for horses, and slings for hanging up cooking utensils, are also made and sold largely in the different villages and towns they visit. The women of this tribe are notorious for their obscene songs accompanied with the most obscene gestures and signs, and also for their grossly abusive language. So proverbial is it that it is a common thing amongst natives to term a quarrelsome foul-mouthed woman a "Kunjurnee." The men of this tribe are a wild-looking set. The women wear *sarees* very long, reaching well over the feet and touching the ground. It is purposed giving a description of this race in future papers on the non-criminal wandering tribes.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### DECCANEE KUNJUR.

THESE people, now residents of the Deccan, have the ordinary Deccanee cast of countenance, are of dark complexion, and have regular features. The men wear their hair long in the Marwaree style. The women wear long laingas which reach down to the ankles, like the Rajput women of the Deccan. These laingas are made of either dark blue or red material, out of sarees cut up for the purpose. Cholees are worn fastened at the back by two knots, one at the top near the neck and another at the bottom of the cholee. Over this cholee a sleeveless jacket or "koorta" is worn ; it has a border of a different coloured material round the bottom. Their hair is worn tied up in a knot or plaited at the back. A nose ornament in the shape of a flower, always of gold, is worn on the left side of the nose. Nose-rings (nuths) and anklets are never worn. Both sexes, like all the criminal tribes, are addicted to liquor. They speak Urdu and

Mahrathee very fluently, but with a slight foreign accent. The language common to themselves is Guzerattee much mixed with Marwaree. Bowries from up-country and these people can understand one another, though their language is not quite the same.

Deccanee Kunjurs pass themselves off as "Kolhatees," "Beldars," "Bhats," also as "Topeewalla Bhats," as they have recently taken to making caps and knitting gloves and socks as an ostensible means of livelihood. Being a true wandering tribe, pals are used. Numbers of donkeys are always to be found about their encampments, by which fact and by the costume of the females this tribe can be easily recognized. The outskirts of a town or village are favourite camping grounds. Dacoity, highway robbery, robbing travellers whilst asleep, donkey and pony stealing are practised by these Kunjurs as a profession. Burglary is not committed by themselves ; but others, chiefly *Budhucks* and *Mangs*, are hired for the purpose, and the spoils are shared. This tribe has also taken now-a-days to stealing bags of grain, bales of cloth, &c., off railway trains, when the engine stops to water at out-of-the-way stations. They are great hands at stealing donkeys, and make away with large numbers of these animals out of every district they may pass through. One mode is to drive their own

donkeys to graze with those of a village, and in the afternoon all are driven to the encampment openly, as if all were theirs. Should an owner recognize his property among those being driven away, he claims it, and the Kunjurs plead ignorance of the fact that any other than their own are present, and with many apologies tell him to take his animal or animals away ; but should they happen to reach the encampment unnoticed by their owner, they are sent off that same night miles and miles away in charge of one of the men, the whole gang following the next morning. Another mode is to catch donkeys unobserved, drive them to a lonely nullah, and there throw them and tie up their legs and leave them. At night the spot is visited, and should the animals be still there, undiscovered by their owner, they are released and driven off as stated above. Ponies are stolen at night from the pegs to which they may be tied, and even out of stalls, and taken off great distances at once. A case has been known of a Kunjur lad who stole a pony in a town one night : he rode him straight off to Ehooraupoor, a distance of 76 miles, where he sold him next day, and returned by rail at once to the place he started from. Deccanee Kunjurs are also much addicted to cutting away bales of cloth off carts on the road to fairs. They are adept sheep and goat stealers, which crime is committed at night. Poultry are also stolen.

Having discovered the fowlhouse, it is approached under cover of darkness, the door is broken upon, and a wet cloth thrown over the roosting birds. The damp cloth induces them all to squat and keep quiet, when one by one their necks are dexterously wrung. The women of this tribe enter towns and villages in parties, sing and dance, and thus gather information, which is imparted to the males. For the purpose of disposing of stolen property these Kunjurs always manage to get very friendly with some patel or villager (the former is always preferred). All plunder is at once handed to the safe keeping of this friend, who sells it for them ; none is retained, as a rule, should they be encamped anywhere within twenty or thirty miles from the scene of the crime whence the property was taken. Beyond this distance a few cloths are generally brought in to be cut up and made into clothing for themselves. If unable to hand over the property at once to the friend, it is buried some distance away from their camp, and made over to him on the first opportunity occurring. Whenever any patel or villager seems to be on intimate terms of friendship with Deccanee Kunjurs, it is almost always a certain sign that he is the receiver of their ill-gotten gains.

## CHAPTER XV.

MARWAREE KUNJUR, known also as  
“ BHAT,” also “ OONCHALAINGAWALLA”  
or “ BYLEWALLA.”

THIS tribe comes from Marwar. They roam all over the Deccan and penetrate far into the Madras Presidency. The men are, as a rule, tall and robust, with the Marwaree cast of countenance, and generally of fair complexion. The women, of whom three or four invariably accompany each gang, however small it may be, are handsome, but dirty in appearance. The language is the same as that of the Deccanee Kunjurs, but pronounced with a strong Marwaree accent. They converse fluently in Marwaree, but very imperfectly in Urdu, and not at all in Mahrattee. They pass themselves off as “ Bhats” or as “ Nutts,” and sometimes as “ Byle Pardhis.”

Like the Deccanee Kunjurs, these people are also a true wandering race. Pals are used, and encampments are always found far away from villages, generally on the boundary between two village lands. Encampments of this tribe may always be recognized by the number of bullocks and cows about them, as well as by the costume of the women, which is a short lainga (petti-coat) reaching down to halfway between the knees and ankles, very full all round the lower part, like that worn by Marwaree women. The colour of the material is generally blue, and often strips of different-coloured stuffs are sewn down it. The bottom of the lainga has a border of other coloured material. No cholee is worn, but a long jacket with long sleeves is used. High shoes (chuddao joothas) like those used by Marwarees are worn. A small quantity of the front hair is plaited on either side of the forehead, and the rest of the hair is drawn back and tied ; it is then either done up in a knot or plaited. On the plaited hair over the forehead cowrie shells or round brass ornaments like buttons are often attached. The women never wear gold ornaments : caste rules forbid the use of this metal. They must be either silver, brass, copper or zinc. The nose-ring is generally made of silver. Glass bangles are not used ; the bangles are generally brass. The earring is a long wire, with a bead at the end as a drop. Beads of all

colours are much used for necklaces. Brass or zinc, sometimes silver, anklets are often worn on both ankles. A peculiarity about the women of this tribe is that they are all confirmed snuff-takers, and consume great quantities of it. The men wear bead and horsehair necklets.

The headman of a gang is styled "jemadar," as is the case of the Deccanee Kunjurs. The men of this tribe commit dacoity, highway robbery, thefts of all kinds, and cattle liftings are resorted to, they confining themselves, however, to bullocks and cows. Donkeys are not stolen, as it is considered derogatory. Dacoity is not so much resorted to now-a-days as is highway robbery, the Thuggee and Dacoity Department having instilled into their minds a wholesome dread. They are most inveterate cattle-lifters and sheep-stealers, and never lose an opportunity of making away with bullocks, cows or sheep. Burglary is never committed. The women enter towns and villages in parties (according to the number with the gang), sing and dance. Information thus collected is imparted to the males. All bulky stolen property is buried at some distance from the camp, but cash, gold and small articles of value are secreted in the legs (which are made hollow for the purpose) of the small cots, about a yard and a half square,

which are always used by them—an excellent mode of hiding valuables, as it would never be suspected by the uninitiated. The women have large long pockets in the front folds of their laingas, in which larger articles of value are stowed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

GOPAUL, known also as "BOREYKAR,"  
or "BORIAWALLA."

THE Gopauls, who are Hindoos, would appear originally to have entered Berar from Nimar and Indore, and thence spread themselves over the southern portion of the dominions of His Highness the Nizam. Where they came from into Nimar it is difficult to say ; most probably from that Eden of predatory races,—Guzerat. They are divided into five tribes, who are distinct from each other. No intermarriage is allowed, and each tribe has its  $12\frac{1}{2}$  sub-divisions. The tribes can be distinguished one from the other by peculiarities in the costume of the males and by their ostensible means of livelihood. All Gopauls are professional cattle-lifters, confining their attention chiefly to buffaloes, sheep and goats. They also commit burglary, and occasionally, but rarely, dacoity. The five tribes are—

1. "Veer Gopauls" are to be met with in the Nimar district of the Central Provinces, northern Khandeish, Berar and north part of His Highness the Nizam's dominions. They are a semi-wandering class, that is, they build themselves huts of date leaves outside villages and reside there for one, two, or even three years at a time, as long as the friendship of the *patel* lasts, then move on to another village. Their ostensible means of livelihood is mat-making from the leaves of the date tree. The costume of the male is very like Kunbis with this exception, that instead of a *dhotur* white drawers reaching down to the knee are worn. The women wear *sarees* and jacket bodies like Mahratta females. The headman of a community is styled "patel."

2. "Pangul Gopauls."—They are to be found in the same parts of the country as the preceding tribe. A large number have settled in Indore. Their ostensible means of livelihood is also mat-making from the leaves of the date tree. These two tribes have selected Berar for their country, and being mat-makers they have obtained the designation of "Boreykars" in these parts. Pangul Gopauls, in addition to this trade, also beg from off trees. A cloth is spread at the foot of a tree, and the Pangul, getting high up on a branch, calls aloud for alms in the name of one of the deities. The

costume of the males is very like the ordinary Kunbi ; drawers are not worn, but *dhoturs*, which is the only difference between these and the Veer Gopauls. The women wear *sarees* and jacket bodies. The leaders of communities are termed "patels." The head Patel of the whole tribe resides in the vicinity of Bhooranpore. He is sent for on all occasions of intricate caste disputes.

3. "Pylwan Gopauls."—To be found south of the Berars in the Deccan. The males wear tight drawers (*cholnas*), a turban and sheet thrown over their persons. They practise gymnastics and perform feats on a long pole, and are accompanied during these performances by tom-toms. They also make mats of date leaves, are not often met out of the Nizam's dominions, and are a wandering race. They live in small tents or pals, which, with their goods and chattels, are carried on buffaloes.

4. "Guzerattee Gopauls," as their name implies, belong to the race who have selected Guzerat as their country. The males wear white or sometimes brick-coloured tight drawers (*chuddas*), a largish turban of either white or red material, and a sheet over the shoulder. Unlike any of the other Gopaul tribes, the men wear necklaces of large and small white beads, and

earrings of brass wire with white beads strung on to the end. The women sometimes use the *lainga* (petticoat), and at others the *saree* or ordinary cloth of the country. This tribe would appear to be the lowest in the Gopaul social scale, for they will eat and drink at the hands of all the others, which is not reciprocated. Their ostensible means of livelihood is gymnastics, chiefly performed on the tight rope, tumbling and feats of strength on the ground, and basket-making. Guzerattee is the language common to themselves, though they converse fluently also in Mahrattee and Hindustani. Curious to say, their slang is very similar to that used by the Budhucks or Bowries and the Wagrises or Takunkars. Many of the words are exactly the same. They are a true wandering class, having no fixed houses, and roam all over Central India and the Deccan, their sole habitations being small portable tents (pals), the materials of which are of a dirty brick-colour.

5. "Kam Gopauls" are to be met with chiefly in the northern portion of the Nizam's dominions, rarely venturing out of that territory. They are also a wandering tribe. The costume of the male is tight short drawers of a dirty yellow colour, a sheet over the person, and a red or white turban, and, unlike all the other tribes, he carries a bag made of thick canvas with

blue stripes. Their ostensible means of livelihood are gymnastics and basket-making.

As already stated, the whole of the Gopaul tribes (or Foreykars) are professional and most inveterate cattle-lifters, buffaloes being the animals preferred ; sheep and goats if found untended are also quietly driven off. In no tribes among them, however, is the crime so systematized as among the Veer and Pangul Gopauls ; everything is well planned and arranged. To facilitate matters these two tribes have established colonies of their people in long strips of country on borders of districts and provinces at regular intervals between H. H. the Holkar's territory and H. H. the Nizam's dominions, that is, on the southern borders of the former, all along the foot of the range of the Satpoora hills and their continuation more westward ; another long chain about fifty miles off, running through the centre of Berar and through Khandeish ; and finally, in H. H. the Nizam's territory a little beyond British border. A buffalo stolen anywhere near the first line is immediately sent off to the intermediate line of colonies, or, if they are afraid of being followed, on thence to H. H. the Nizam's territory, and *vice versa*, being passed on from colony to colony, in an incredibly short space of time, and sold after reaching their destination at the nearest weekly

market as soon as possible. Detection is very difficult, owing to the distance placed between the spot where the animal is stolen and where it is disposed of. These people are answerable for a great deal of the cattle-lifting which is committed, especially of buffaloes. A peculiarity with this race is that a Gopaul will rarely steal near his own home ; for instance, a Khandeish man will either go to Hyderabad territory, Berar, or any other colony, and, being sheltered and secreted by his kinsmen, will steal sheep and cattle and commit other crimes and be off before his presence has become known to the villagers and others not of the tribe. As a rule, no disguise is assumed but that of a *gowlee*. There is a *Mahomedan* race of "Boriawallas," known as "Baria Baffs," who are great dacoits and highway-men by profession, but, unlike their Hindoo namesakes, do not lift cattle. The Thuggee and Dacoity Department have known Baria Baffs for years, and have sent many of them across the seas. They are a wandering tribe, sometimes assuming the disguise of fakirs to obtain information, and are a dangerous and reckless class of criminals, being much addicted to extensive torchlight dacoities in villages wherever they can get a chance. H. H. the Nizam's dominions and sometimes parts of the Bombay Presidency are frequented by them.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### MANG.

HELD in the lowest estimation from the earliest period, Mangs take their social scale below Dhers. Looked on with the greatest contempt, hated by all, and bitterly persecuted at times by the reigning Hindu authorities in past times, the tribe in the Deccan was thrown into a condition of abject want and deplorable misery, and it was only the supremacy of the British being established, and with it its accompanying just rule, which has allowed these people to assert themselves at all. Shunning populous districts, they sought the shelter of wilds and forests. Gradually, however, since then they have spread over the greater part of the Deccan, and even further north, and nearly every village now has its Mang family. Driven from want originally to commit crime, the instinct is still alive in some, especially in those known as Ruckwuldar or Ghatolia Mangs. The other classes are now peaceable and earn their livelihood,

each according to its own caste rules ; some by making baskets, and some hempen and hide ropes and brooms, whilst the females of all act as midwives throughout the country to highest and lowest castes alike.

+ The Ruckwuldar Mangs are addicted to dacoity, robbery on roads, burglary, and thefts of sorts. They are most daring, and look upon robbery rather as a natural profession. The leader of a gang is styled "naik," and his orders are attended to with the most implicit obedience. He takes precedence on all occasions, and in disputes his decision is final. On him rests the responsibility of carrying out plans for expeditions. Information is obtained when going round in villages selling baskets or brooms. A suitable place being fixed on for a dacoity or robbery, all the gang meet in the house of one of the members, much liquor is imbibed and a consultation is held, when detailed instructions are issued to each as to the part he is to take. The goddess Devi is worshipped and her aid solicited on their undertaking. Upon the night agreed on, the gang assemble, and armed with swords, matchlocks, stones and clubs (and carrying in addition a small knife) they proceed to the attack. Having placed men to watch the different streets or roads leading to the house, the rest of the gang make a rush with shouts of "deen." The doors

being forced open, the house is entered and the inmates are forced, by threats of violence, to show where the valuables may be hidden. The persons of women are religiously respected, no violence being ever offered to them. Having accomplished their object the gang retire and return to their head-quarters by a different route to the one by which they went. Shoes of the kind worn by other castes, or fakir bags and green beads, are taken and left on the scene of crime, so as to throw suspicion on those classes. On arrival at headquarters more liquor is consumed and the gang disperse. The property is buried in some field with a mark to denote the spot, till the hue and cry of the crime is over, when it is unearthed and divided, the naik getting extra share. When employed in plunder they use a peculiar slang language, not known out of their tribe. Burglary is generally committed single-handed ; on rare occasions two or even three will band together for the purpose. The instrument used is of iron, about a foot long, and shaped very like a chisel at the point. It is by looking for marks of this instrument that it can be ascertained whether or not the breach in the wall has been the handiwork of a Mang. These robbers do not stop short of murder in cases when opposition is offered, but this extremity is only resorted to when they are wounded or have their retreat cut off. Should an article

on a limb be difficult of displacement, however, they do not hesitate to amputate the offending member in order to secure the jewel.

The castes of Kassar (glass bangle sellers) and Mallees are safe from injury either to person or property at the hands of Mangs, the former because they supply glass and lacquered bangles by which a married woman is known from a widow, and the latter because of their avocation, being by birth tillers of the soil, in opposition to the cultivators who labour from necessity, Mangs having respect for Mother Earth and her produce. In return Kassars and Mallees are good friends on all occasions of trouble, and help them as well as they can, and often among these classes are people who dispose of the stolen property for them. The entire Deccanee Mang family is divided into four classes. In addition to those mentioned below, it is curious that nearly every Hindu tribe has its Mang division attached to it. The Bunjaras have their Mangs (Dhalias); the Koorkcos, the Telingas, the Bedurs, &c., have theirs.

The four classes alluded to are—

1. “Ruckwuldar Mang,” known also as “Mang Ramoosee,” and in some parts of the country as

"Ghatolia Mang;" they take service as village watchmen, make baskets and mats of *date* leaves.

2. "Holud Mang."—These people beat the tom-tom, play on a sort of clarionette, and sound the crooked horn at birth and marriage ceremonies. It is men of this class who act as hangmen at executions. Amongst them are also found shoemakers and workers in leather.

3. "Nuda Mang," known in some parts as "Waradu Mang;" they tan skins, make hide and hempen ropes, brooms, and baskets of the *bamboo*, never working with *date* leaves. This is the only way one can tell this tribe from the Ruckwuldar Mang.

4. "Dukelwar Mang" are the "bhat" (bards) of the whole Mang tribe. This is a peculiar wandering class who subsist by begging solely from Mangs. They use pals, which are conveyed from place to place on donkeys. Each gang is accompanied by numbers of dogs. On arrival at a village where there may be a Mang, the Dukelwar erects his pal immediately in front of this man's house, and himself and family, cattle and dogs, must be fed by the owner. Should he offend in any way, a figure representing a man is made of rags and stuck, head downwards, on a long stick by the "bard,"

and is exhibited as being the figure of the offending Mang, who is forthwith put out of caste by his brethren, and he may not sell anything, not even a broom, till he re-attains his caste privileges, which necessitates a heavy outlay. ~~X~~

Such are the four classes. Ever held in contempt and shunned, yet Mangs, as a rule, are a merry race and always seem cheerful, caring little for the scoffs and rebuffs of the world.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

## MANG GARODEE.

THESE people, like most of the Hindoo wandering criminal tribes, appear to owe their origin to Guzerat, for the language common to them is Guzerattee. It is not of the purest, however, being much mixed with Mahrattee, doubtless from long residence in the Deccan. Mang Garodees are a purely criminal tribe, being professional robbers and cattle-lifters. Even the women and children steal habitually. Encampments of these people may be recognized by their little tents, which, unlike those of other tribes, are open all round at the bottom ; the fly, instead of coming to the ground, is tied up some distance off the ground to staves driven into the earth ; no ropes are used. When a large gang is collected the tents are pitched in lines. Numbers of buffaloes and dogs are always to be seen with them. Women and children also accompany each gang. When moving camp their tents, goods and chattels are invariably carried on the backs of bullocks or barren cow buffaloes, caste rules precluding the use of any other carriage. Every encampment has a leader, who is styled "naik." This man may generally be recognized by having some red

woollen cloth about his person or a red shawl over his shoulders, this being used as a mark of distinction or rank. The naik is always spokesman for the gang, and invariably comes forward to act as such should any one visit the party. The men are, as a rule, well set up and tall. Their costume is something like that worn by professional gymnasts, *i.e.*, tight, reddish-brown-coloured short drawers, a waistband with fringe at either end, a sheet thrown over the shoulders, and a carelessly tied turban, rather large in size when one is worn : usually a piece of dirty rag acts as such. Brass earrings, and very often a necklace of beads, are worn. The women wear their *sarees* short and tied in the style of Telinga females, blue being the favourite colour. Bangles, brass earrings, bead necklaces, and sometimes zinc or brass anklets, are ornaments much fancied. No trouble is taken with the hair, it is seemingly never combed, is short and always dishevelled. Both sexes are extremely dirty about their persons and clothing, and most offensive to go near, and are, as a rule, covered with vermin. The women are generally very violent when any attempt is made to search an encampment, especially when stolen property is concealed in it. Instances have been known of their seizing their infants by the ankle and swinging the poor little creatures round their heads, declaring they would continue doing so till

the little things died, if the police did not leave the encampment. Occasions have also been heard of on which the women of a gang have cast off all their clothing and appeared in a perfect state of nudity, declaring they would charge the police with hurting their modesty. Mang Garodees steal both by day and night. They never commit burglary, but will occasionally go in for highway robbery and dacoity. Men of this tribe are expert cattle-lifters, which crime they are much addicted to, confining themselves, though, chiefly to buffaloes, which they steal whilst out grazing and very dexterously disguise by trimming the horns and firing so as to avoid recognition by their rightful owners. Stolen buffaloes are taken great distances for sale. Both men and women pick pockets. During harvest time they are much given to stealing grain and cotton, a favourite place for hiding such plunder being in *kudbee* stacks in the immediate vicinity of the encampment. Other plunder (such as jewels, cash and cloths), should it have been some time in their possession, is concealed about the persons of the women, or in the saddle-bags of their buffaloes. If, however, it is freshly acquired, it is invariably buried in the neighbourhood of the camps. Mang Garodees are addicted to liquor, and liquor-vendors are almost always the receivers of their stolen property. Valuable booty is passed on, as a rule, to the nearest

gang in an adjoining district or province. Friendly patels are also employed to dispose of stolen property. Stealing goats and sheep is a favourite occupation of the men of this tribe. They will either carry them off alive from their pens at night or will kill them whilst out grazing. This latter is done in the following manner :— Having spotted either a sheep or a goat which may be grazing furthest away from the flock, the thief awaits his opportunity till the shepherd's back is turned, when the animal is quickly captured. Placing a foot on the back of the neck near the head and seizing the animal under the chin by the right hand, the neck is broken by a sudden jerk, the body is then thrown into a bush or in some dip in the ground, to avoid notice, and he walks away watching from a distance. The shepherd, ignorant of the loss of one of his animals, goes on leisurely driving his flock before him. When well out of sight the carcass is removed to the encampment. Great care is taken that the skin, horns and hoofs are immediately burnt, so as to avoid detection. Mang Garodees, male and female, have recently taken to travel about by rail, and steal from persons in the same manner as Bhamptas. It is a rule among them not to give a girl in marriage till the intended husband has proved himself a proficient thief.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### RAMOSEE.

RAMOSEES are a predatory tribe residing in the Poona and Sattara Collectorates of the Bombay Presidency. Some few, owing to the late famine, and even previous to that, found their way north. In these parts they call themselves hamals and work with men of that class, finding employment in the different cotton presses, &c. When questioned in foreign countries as to their caste, they are very careful to hide the fact that they are Ramoosees, and pass themselves off as Mahrattas or Kunbis, and it is only by making careful and secret inquiries from some well-disposed true hamal that their caste can be ascertained. Ramoosees are Hindoos, and reside in the outskirts of towns and villages in their own country, but in foreign parts they generally live in the hamal lines. They resemble much the Takunkars of Berar in their habits, manners, and modes of committing crime. Most of them are hereditary village watchmen

of the parts of the country they reside in. There are, however, several villages composed entirely of Ramoosees, in which they live like other ryots. Captain Mackintosh, in his excellent history of the tribe, published in the "Madras Journal of Literature and Science" for April 1834, conjectures "that the Ramoosees, having originally lived at a distance from villages, must have been termed Ram Vassi, *i. e.*, residents of waste or desolate land, from the Sanscrit 'Ram,' 'a waste land,' vassi, 'residing,' and that Ramvassi in course of time was converted into Ramoosee. Some of the tribe, however, maintain that their name is derived from 'Ram Vounssy,' *i. e.*, descendants of Rama, that he created them when passing through the Deccan to Ceylon in search of Seeta." Ramoosees are of low caste. The tribe is divided into two main branches—"Chowan" and "Jadow." From these, numerous sub-divisions have sprung. They have the remains of a distinct language (many of the words of which belong to Telegu), which is seldom used by them except when busily engaged in plundering, or when they wish to communicate something secretly in the presence of other persons. From long residence in the Mahratta country, they converse in Mahrattee. Their chief deity is "Khundoba." From their rites, ceremonies, and original language, it would appear that the tribe originally emigrated from some part of the

Telingana country. Both sexes have quite adopted the Southern Mahratta style of costume, and in features the males bear a strong resemblance to the men of that part of the country. A great many have taken to cultivation. Like the Takunkars, they have their "naiks" and "surnaiks," and the country was divided off into districts for each naik. Robberies were not committed in other than their own district, but this is fast dying out. Naiks are no longer obeyed as in days gone by, and the country is common to all. They do not wander into distant countries on plundering expeditions, but confine their operations to from thirty to fifty miles in the neighbourhood of their own homes. Should, however, a number of Ramoosees meet accidentally in a foreign country, whither they may have gone in search of work, they will form themselves into a gang and commit dacoities, highway robberies, and burglaries. It is a custom with Ramoosees to commit at least one of the above crimes once a year. They do not, as a rule, stoop to petty crime. Whilst about it they do a good stroke of business, always biding their time till they are sure of a good haul. The man who leads a party on an expedition is called a naik. Previous to attempting to commit dacoity, or attacking a treasure party or party of travellers, correct information is obtained regarding the house, place, or persons they mean to attack, and the

number of persons they are likely to encounter in their enterprise, so as to enable them to make suitable arrangements before setting out. In former days they used to send members of their tribe disguised as Gosseins to get this information ; but now this is not done, it is secured through members of their own tribe living in the village where they mean to commit dacoity, or whence the party they mean to attack starts. The silence of the informants is secured by granting them a share of the booty. The naik determines on the number of men to be employed, making sure there will be sufficient to ensure success. All the members of the gang are not taken from the same village. A supply of bread is prepared for the party sufficient for the number of days they expect to be out. They trust to one another's honour to adhere to the old rule not to give information against each other. Formerly they used to take an oath before the naik by the "Bel-bhundar," but this is now dispensed with. If bent on a large dacoity, they arm themselves chiefly with swords, taking some matchlocks should they deem it necessary, and the remainder have merely sticks. One of the party carries a small copper or earthen pot, or a cocoanut shell, with a supply of ghee to moisten their torches with before they commence operations. Ramoosees avoid, as much as possible, being seen either when proceeding to the object of their attack

o: returning afterwards to their houses. They travel at night, and conceal themselves in ravines and jungles during the day. In committing crime they gird up their loins tightly, and if the place attacked be near their homes they muffle their faces, so as not to be recognized, but if it should be a great distance off this is not done. If the persons attacked resist, the Ramoosees immediately show fight. It is a rule with them not to cause death unless they have no other way of effecting their object, or of escaping. On special occasions when attacking, they rush on with cries of "Jejoorajai!" Travellers proceeding on their journey will probably see three or four men sitting quietly in the middle of the road apparently eating *pan sooparee*, but who, on being approached, jump up and demand all their property, and if the travellers should make any resistance, comrades secreted behind bushes or rocks are called up and they are overpowered. Should the object of attack be a house, one or two of the gang carry small hatchets or crowbars to force open the doors, and, like Kaikarees, some of the party armed with stones are placed at convenient corners to keep off intending rescuers.

Captain Mackintosh, in his history of the tribe, written in 1834, gives an interesting account of the

ceremonies Ramoosees went through in those days before attacking a house. It is to the following effect :—On the gang approaching to within six or eight hundred yards of the house to be attacked, shoes were taken off, and sword scabbards removed, and both secreted hard by. Sometimes shoes were tied to the back of their waists, and all, turning towards the town and looking in the direction of the house they were going to assail, threw themselves into a supplicating posture, and, making repeated obeisances, invoked the tutelary spirit of the place to favour their undertaking. One of the party having taken off his turban, it was cut into three, five, or seven pieces, but never into more (they liked odd numbers). Each piece was  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , 3, or 5 cubits in length. These were twisted to form so many torches, which were well moistened with the ghee they took along with them. These were lighted, being cautious to prevent them blazing into a flame until the house was reached. The man who gave up his turban to be converted into torches secured as a perquisite the best turban he could find among the plundered property. The whole of this ceremony is now-a-days quite dispensed with. Their torches are now made of any kind of rags, lest they might be traced from the cloth in case of the torch being left behind. Matchlock-men with the gang never enter the house, but remain outside and assist

the stone-throwers to keep off people by firing off their matchlocks. Stolen property is seldom concealed in their own houses, but is buried in jungles or hillsides, or handed at once to confidential friends to keep. They have systematic receivers of stolen jewels in certain village jewellers and Marwaree bunias. Heinous crime is only committed by them on dark nights, or in the last quarter of the moon. During the monsoon they seldom make any excursions for plunder, and certainly do not commit any where there is black or soft soil, for fear of being tracked. Ramoosees generally succeed in levying black-mail from travellers putting up at villages where they may be residing. Should this demand be refused, the travellers are almost sure to be robbed either in the course of the night in the village, or on the road after leaving it. When crops are ripening, Ramoosees hire themselves out to villagers as field watchmen, and any land-owner of the village who may refuse so to hire one is almost sure to have his crops robbed sooner or later. It was only up to a recent date that European residents in Poona, &c., found themselves obliged to keep Ramoosees in their service, to prevent their houses being robbed. This is not necessary now, with the improved police organization.

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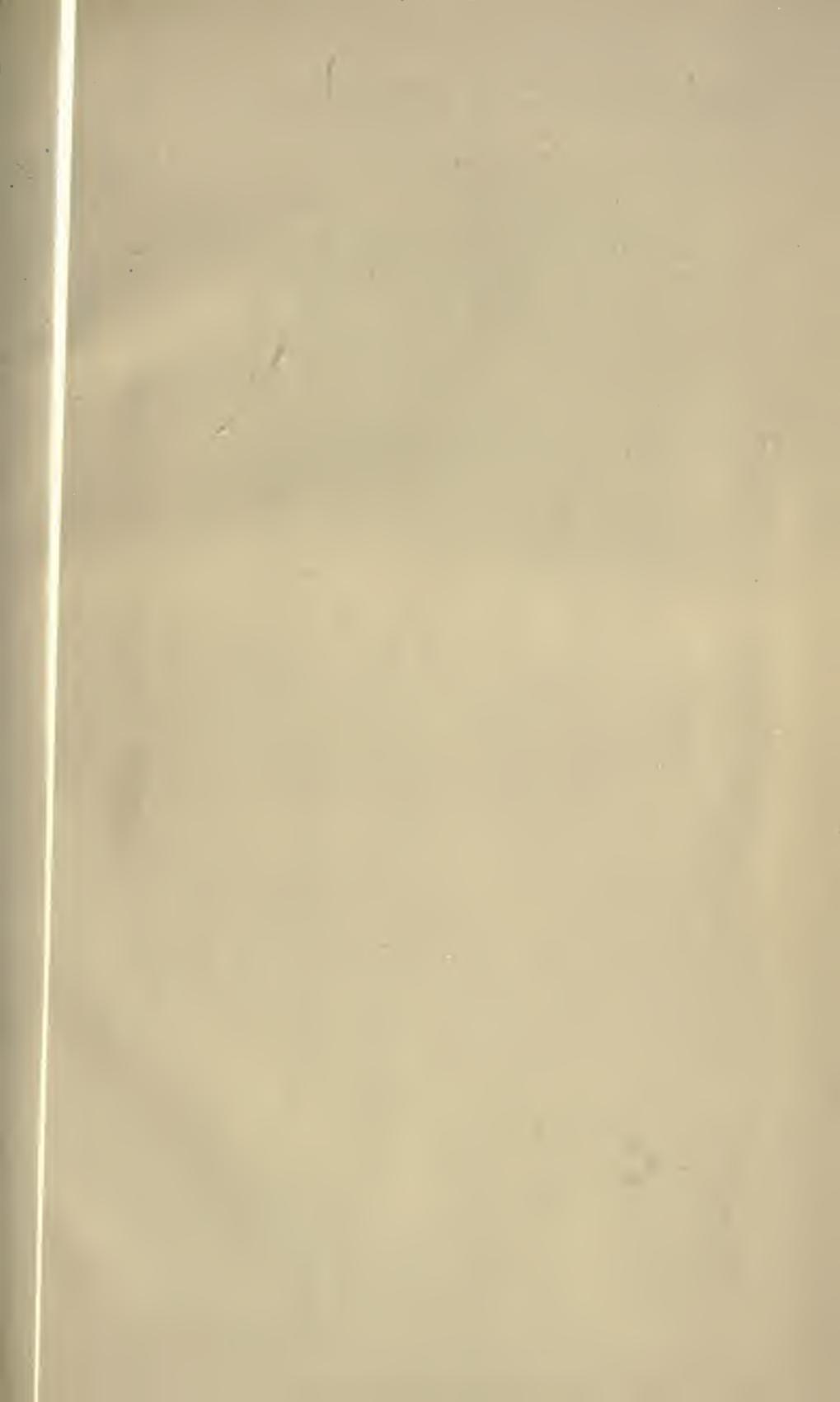


**CHIANG VOCABULARY OF THE MARRAONA, RONGRES, TAKINKEAS, TINGOTI, PARDHIS, DECCANEES**

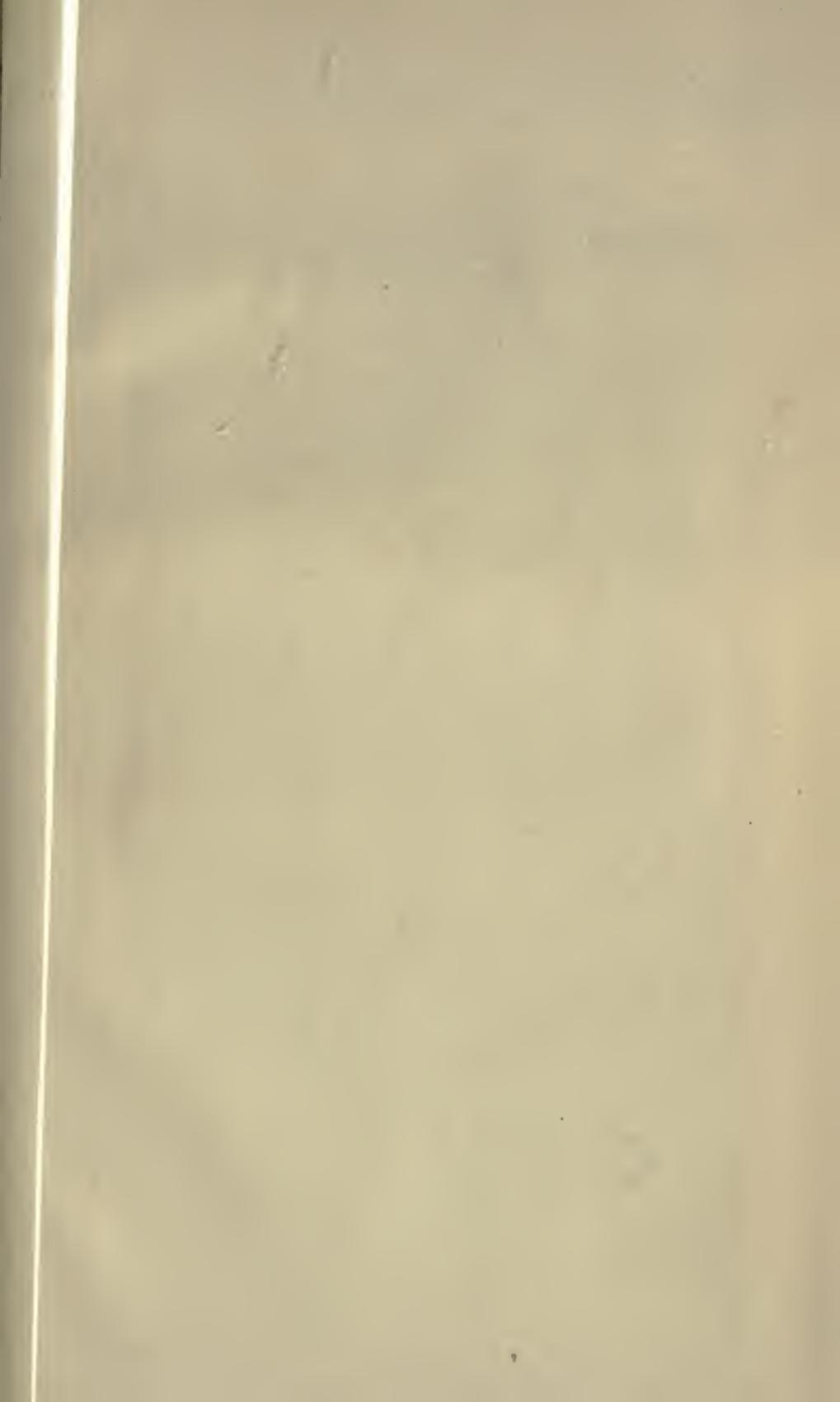
**KUNJURS, DOOKUR KOLHATEES, AND MANGS.**

Bowie (Mal-poora).	Takunkar.	Lungoti-Pardhi.	Kunjur (Deccanees).	Dookur Kolhatee.	Mang.
Dacoity,	Kamie.	Kooto.	Gamee.	Rota.	Bhooga.
Higway Robbery.	Dugroo Lootoo.	Wududla.	Bolee.	Kanall.	Wanj.
Burglary.	Duddoo, Buglee.	Cheko.	(No slang.)	Naddarma.	Kowdee.
Theft.	Kaglee, Kamai.	Issalee.	Bolee.	Gimree.	Kowlee.
Stolen property (Ornaments or cash).	Bhogee.	Peypuddoo.	Gamee-ka-Mal.	Gimri-da-Mal.	Kowdee Mal.
Stolen cloth.	Cheytuddo.	Cheytuddo.	Ruchada.	Gimri-da-Napad.	Satha.
A rupee.	Dhaleo.	Dhaleo.	Teeva.	Boorka.	Boorka.
Gold.	Khono.	Khono.	Bona.	Sookla.	Boona.
Silver.	Dholee.	Dholee.	Nandee.	Rupa.	Nandee.
A gun.	Rakloo.	Pooktee.	Kalee.	Nundook.	Pooknee.
A sword.	Patodo.	Tuplee.	Weyluttii.	Chimlee.	Darkee.
To escape.	Nackaja.	Nassee-ja.	Nassee-ja.	Nassee-ejasur.	Keenasee-ga.
An European.	Wanadoo, Khaib.	Ratho, Khaib.	Ratho.	Topia.	Noora.
A Policeman.	Londeo, Kapee.	Kalo.	Tara.	Jomer.	Zoomanee.
A man (not of the tribe).	Mancow.	Kalo.	Chupka.	Dunbee.	Zoomanee.
A man (of the tribe).	Bowrie.	Madkow.	Bowrie.	Batoo.	Kompta.
A woman (of the tribe).	Bawan.	Wagri.	Bawan.	Batanee.	Chueng.
A boy (of the tribe).	Chee.	Wagan.	Chee.	Cheepkee.	Tularee.
Shoes.	Khakuddoo.	Khakuddoo.	Khakuddoo.	Tabur.	Chora.
A bullock.	Dhando.	Dhando.	Dhando.	Turka.	Goonia.
A dog.	Londeo.	Hudkeo.	Bhurboota.	Taree.	Nyle.
				Jokul.	Jokul.
				• Roota, Dukul.	Kakod.









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